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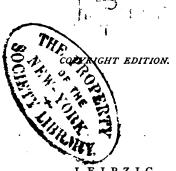


NCW Parr

# KATHERINE'S TRIAL.

### HOLME LEE, P.S.

AUTHOR OF "THE BEAUTIFUL MISS BARRINGTON," ETC.



LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1873.

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True Lovers.

A FEBRUARY afternoon, purple and very still as it drew towards dusk. Rous Eliot made the road fly behind him on his way to Katherine. And for an hour before he came, Kate stood furtive at her window, watching. For be it known that these two were lovers, and that their love was forbidden.

A swift tall figure appeared under the limes. Katherine laughed to herself, and flew downstairs, crying in a joyous voice of well-simulated surprise: "I do believe that Cousin Rous is here!" And, in fact, there my lord was: wanting a welcome, but not wanting the coolness that can dispense with it where it is not offered.

Kate was all one blush and smile. She knew, the artless deceiver, that Rous was coming. But they were at war with her father, and such feints, 'tis said, are fair in love and war. Mr. Eliot opened the library-door, and looked out where the allies were exchanging confidential whispers. They were not aware of him, and he, too, made a feint and a retreat. The enemy was very strong. It was his strategy to avoid a battle.

A few words to explain.

Rous and Katherine were brothers' children. Rous was the son of the younger brother, born in India ten years before his cousin. Katherine's advent was late. Long desired, ardently prayed for, she came, at last, as a godsend unexpected. The arrival of a little daughter at the Hall altered the prospective position of the little nephew, who had been consigned to his uncle, and indulged in the privileges of a son. He ceased to be the heir. Miss Katherine had deposed him.

Rous went to Eton, to Addiscombe, to India, to his father.

After five years' absence, he returned to England. His uncle's house had been home to him before, and he went back to it as home. Five and twelve are seventeen—Katherine was seventeen. The cousins were idle, and fell in love. When the mischief was done Mr. Eliot said with a strong declaration that it was nonsense; they were too near akin to marry, and he would never allow it.

Katherine appealed to her mother. Mrs. Eliot took the part of the lovers. She reasoned with her husband of how Rous had been superseded in his inheritance, and how to give him Kate was the only perfect way to reward him for the beautiful generosity with which he had borne it. Mr. Eliot did not condescend to refute this absurd argument. He gave Rous a hundred pounds, and sent him off to see Paris. Paris seen, the young man became impatient to see Kate again. And there he was.

The confidential whispering came to an abrupt conclusion.

A rosy-faced old woman descended the stairs in list slippers unheard, but she quickly made herself evident: "Is that my lord?" she inquired, using Rous Eliot's nursery-title, earned by his baby imperiousness, and not forfeited by any maturer humility.

"Yes, Joyce, it is my lord—soon tired of Paris, is he not?" said the young lady.

"The centre of the world is here, Miss Kate. My mistress fancied she heard you cry out on his name. You will be coming up by-and-by?"

"When Rous has seen Papa. Go in now, Rous, and get it over."

It was not over so quickly as Kate wished. Mr.

Eliot could not have more desired the society of Rous if he had been his very son. To exile him from Bently was as severe discipline for himself as for the rash lovers. But he was ever stedfast in his purposes, and with his whole household against him in this purpose of dividing them, he did not falter. His nephew marched in, head well up, hand outstretched, voice loud and gay, but with just a slight inflection of bravado in its tone. He was received very coolly.

"So here you are again, Rous? Paris would have amused me longer than three weeks at your age."

"It is dull, sir, for a fellow alone in a foreign city when he cannot speak the language."

"If you found one place dull why did you not try another? You have not spent all your money, eh?"

"No, sir, not one half of it."

"Then, my dear Rous, you must go on your travels again. And don't spend any faster in the expectation that I will have you here. Try Scotland, try Ireland, if France bores you."

"It is such unchristian work, sir, travelling in winter."

"Make a tour of our cathedral towns."

Rous groaned audibly. "And there are such fine hunting days in February!" ejaculated he.

Mr. Eliot was touched. He mentioned casually that Don Roderick and Slyboots were never in better condition, and that the meet was at Bently on the morrow. Rous suddenly reared himself up, and forgot his momentary collapse. For the next half hour their talk was of horses, of hounds and country neighbours. Then a bell rang, the first dinner-bell, and there was a deferring of contention for the present. But only a deferring. Both felt that it must come.

An old-fashioned, oak-panelled parlour, each panel framing a portrait; a round table lighted by a pendent Venetian lustre, and decorated with flowers of the season: snow-drops in moss, and violets revealed by their perfume. Kate's daily task. The gleam of antique silver, the pure whiteness of fine napery, were exceedingly pleasant and soothing to the eyes of Rous Eliot, lately escaped from the sombre, monotonous service of inns. Bently was a most comfortable house; and for a man under thirty, Rous Eliot had a quite singular appreciation of the delicate delights of life—the more praise to him that he could forego them with absolute equanimity at need.

They were only four at table, but four as nicelooking people as any in the county or the kingdom. Mr. Eliot looked the country-gentleman of good family, good fortune and good education; he was an Eton man, like his nephew, and like him, fond of sport. Mrs. Eliot had been beautiful once, but that was only a tradition now. She retained her air of distinction, and that was all. She had become thin to meagreness, and her countenance had the anxious, nervous cast of distress that tries in vain to seem quiescent. Never were mother and daughter less resembling. Mrs. Eliot in her prime had been Juno-like and flaxen-fair. Katherine was slight, graceful, playful; hazel-eyed, dark-browed and darkhaired. On provocation she could blush like the reddest rose in the garden; but, at rest, her face had no colour beyond the shadows of the most lovely modelling. Hers was a rare beauty, as much of the spirit as of the flesh. Being happy to-night, she showed that she was happy. She wore a dress of sky-blue silk with a trimming of fringe, and white camelias in her hair and bosom. She had made herself pretty for Rous; and Rous testified his gratitude by many long looks across the snowdrops. In appearance the cousins were perfect opposites. He was of the true Eliot breed, tall, robust, sanguine, and vigorous in character as in constitution,

Mr. Eliot had come to dinner in serious mood, but his wife smiled on Kate's lover with undisguised cordiality. Her restless visage was the calmer for his presence. The poor lady loved Rous better than her girl. He had been with her, a wilful tempestuous little boy, through those early years of disappointment when no Kate was, which accounted for it, perhaps. But Rous did not reciprocate her partiality. Her indulgence had been leavened with caprice always, and her utmost kindness had never fully engaged his confidence. There were persons who said they never felt at ease where Mrs. Eliot was, and Rous was one of them.

"It is a pleasure to see you in your own place again, Rous," was her first observation on sitting down to table—not a very considerate observation in the circumstances.

Rous, unfolding his napkin and regarding nobody in particular, assured her that he was very glad to be there.

"Tell us something that you did in Paris," interposed Mr. Eliot.

The conversation once launched on this stream, ran without disturbing eddies to the end of dinner. Though Rous had protested against the dulness of Paris, it did not appear that he had wanted for really excellent entertainment. He impressed Katherine.

with a delightful idea of it, and she tried to engage her father in a promise that some day he would take her there. A kind look from Rous intimated that if her father were obdurate, he would be more compliant. Kate blushed. Rous glowed. Mr. Eliot gave his wife a signal to begone, and take her girl with her. And then came the tug of war.

Mr. Eliot began. "I put it to your honour, Rous—is it fair to raise rebellion under my roof? Kate has been a good child in your absence—no pining, no fretting. She will not give trouble if you give none."

"My honour, sir, is engaged on the other side," rejoined the lover, with superb audacity.

Mr. Eliot was amazed, and for a moment silenced. But he kept his temper, and when he spoke again, it was with weighty words. "You mean that Kate loves you as you love her? I do not make light of that—I say, more's the pity. For you must both get over it. Your cousinship is an irretrievable accident."

"Cousins marry every day," objected Rous.

Mr. Eliot refused to submit his prejudice to discussion. "My Kate shall not marry her cousin. If we are to be friends, Rous, you must behave well, and cease to entice her. And the only security for the present is that you go out of the way."

"It is a hard sentence. Let us talk of it tomorrow, sir," suggested the young man.

"Rather let us have done talking of it to-night. My mind is fixed. Kate is but seventeen, and will not disobey me. If I did not know you so well, I should be tempted to impeach the disinterestedness of your affection."

"If we could change places on the spot, sir, I would have no wife but Kate!" asseverated the lover.

"And I promise you, Rous, that I will never marry while you are a bachelor!" echoed a brave, sweet voice at the door; and Kate, sent with a message from her mother, advanced into the light of the fire.

The message was forgotten. And surely Kate had forgotten herself, or these bold words would not have escaped her. They followed Rous's asseveration like the flash when flint and steel strike. He sprang up and took her hand; spoke a few low, intense vows for her ear only, and so they stood, confronting her father, and defying him while they trembled. For a minute, perhaps, not more. Then Kate fled, threw herself on her knees, and buried her face in her mother's lap.

Rous resumed his seat with a countenance of

triumph. "I put it to your honour, sir," said he, with sly significance.

"We will talk of it to-morrow," rejoined Mr. Eliot.

All things considered, it was certainly diplomatic not to renew the fight at that moment.

#### II.

### A Hunting Morning.

A SOUTHERLY wind and a cloudy sky proclaimed a hunting morning.

The Hall was astir betimes, and a great breakfast prepared for the gentlemen who came from afar to the meet. Rous Eliot appeared in pink, a perfect dandy, and in exuberant spirits. He was a very popular young fellow. The servants all beamed on him. The guests shook hands warmly, and asked what he meant by running away in the best of the season. Perhaps one or two entertained a shrewd conjecture. But Mr. Eliot could hardly believe his ears when he heard his nephew impudently answer them that he did not mean to run away again. A blithe old apple-faced neighbour then called out for Miss Kate-where was Miss Kate? Was she not going to grace the field to-day? Rous turned quickly about as his uncle replied that Kate was to be a stay-at-home for once, and muttered: "Is she to be punished for me, sir?" Mr. Eliot pretended to be deaf; and Rous, thereupon, plunged upstairs four Katherine's Trial

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steps at a time, and knocked rather too imperatively at the door of the ladies' private parlour.

"Who's there?" cried Joyce, opening to him. "My lord, of course—who else knocks to drive the door down? Now, my lord, what is it you want?"

Rous looked over the old woman's head, and saw that the parlour was empty. He sighed.

"If it is Miss Kate, I don't know that she is to be spoken with yet; if it is the mistress, I'm sure she's not."

But Kate had heard his swift foot on the stairs, and came out of her chamber much rosier than the morning. "No, I am not to ride with you—papa says it," whispered she, with a mutinous face. "And dear Bonnybelle will be so unhappy in the stable by herself. Has Miss Buxton come?"

"Not yet, but she must be coming; for the groom has arrived with Sprite and Tom's black horse. They will drive over from Merrifield in his mail-phaeton."

"Oh! I want to try my Bonnybelle against Sprite. Stop one minute, Rous—an idea enters my head." Kate ran to the writing-table, and committed the idea to paper. "There," said she, doubling it up into a tiny cocked-hat note, "give that to Miss Buxton the very instant she comes, and I'll be ready."

Rous was intelligent. "Kate's wit against papa's caution?" Kate bade him hush, and go.

Miss Buxton, that veteran sportswoman, was just come. She read Kate's idea, glanced with experienced feminine acumen at Rous, nodded, and said: "Leave it to me." Rous nodded in reply, and disappeared amongst the gentlemen in the dining-parlour.

Miss Buxton stood on the hall-steps, gazed about indoors and out, and presently cried in a loud interrogative voice: "I don't see Katherine Eliot—nor Bonnybelle?"

Mr. Eliot came up to her, and explained that Kate was not going to ride. Rous also reappeared. The lady's countenance fell.

"Ah, now, that is too bad! I am disappointed. And Sprite was sent over on purpose. Gyp is much more suited to this line of country: but Katherine dares to back her Bonnybelle against my thoroughbred little mare, and I am bound to teach her humility?"

Mr. Eliot said courteously: "Oh, if that is your understanding, Kate must go. Rous, call Kate. Tell her Miss Buxton is here." And orders were given to a groom to saddle Bonnybelle, and prepare to ride with his young lady.

Kate, called by her cousin, came rather too

quickly for a conspirator—and fully equipped too. If Mr. Eliot had been of a suspicious temper, he must have observed this, and drawn conclusions. Probably he was thinking more of his guests, and of the sport to come. It was stiff country round Bently, but the sport was always good, and he had the pride of an owner in it. He gave his little girl a hand up into her saddle; admonished her that if the pace became severe, or the run went beyond Mitcham toll-gate, she was to fall out, and ride home again with her groom. And then he left her to her own devices.

Katherine Eliot had a trick of looking all she felt. Happy and triumphant was her air now, as she reined in her eager Bonnybelle, and challenged Miss Buxton to confess that she was a beauty beyond compare.

"Handsome is that handsome does," rejoined that lady. "Sprite will give her fifty yards, or twice fifty, and beat her at a canter across Hollerby Wold."

Kate appealed to Rous, if that was likely, and invited him to back her favourite.

"Do you want me to lose my money?" said he, with more frankness than gallantry. "Bonnybelle is worthy of her name, but Sprite is a bit of the best

blood in England—here she comes. For a light-weight, Miss Buxton, she is a perfect thing."

"So she is—a sweet thing, and would go till she dropt," replied Sprite's proprietress, too confident of her merits to be uplifted even by the appreciation of such a judge of horseflesh as Rous Eliot. Kate emitted a gentle murmur of disapprobation, caressed Bonnybelle, and looked at her cousin with winsome reproach.

"Truth's truth, Kate, all the world over," said he, and would not risk his credit in deference to her partial opinion. As he assisted Miss Buxton to mount, he remarked that there was a large meet this morning.

"There always is a large meet at Bently; but I prefer our country for the horses. I crane at Mitcham Fences as if I were doomed some day to come to grief there."

"Then take my advice, and leave Mitcham Fences alone. They require a nerve."

"And lose the run—No, thank ye, Mr. Rous; that may do for Bonnybelle, but not for Sprite."

"You are warned—Ah! Slyboots—Look at him! There's a horse takes his fences, Mitcham Fences and all, like a bird!"

Rous Eliot spoke with enthusiasm, and swung himself into his saddle with glee. The grooms were

now bringing round the hunters of the gentlemen coming out from breakfast, and all was lively, loud bustle, without confusion. The hounds were careering along the road in the wake of the old huntsman, winding his horn a quarter of a mile away. Soon all were streaming after: Squire Eliot, Topham, Buxton, Jacques, Beauclerc, his near neighbours, and a score of country gentlemen besides, with sons and satellites, born and bred in the traditions of a famous hunting country. There was one parson, if not more, amongst them, as keen for sport as any layman of them all; and there was a doctor and a lawyer or two from Steepleton, the market-town, and Robinson, the landlord of the "Swan" inn, one of the best mounted men in the field. And tagrag and bobtail in due proportion.

Miss Buxton paired off at the start with Squire Jacques, the apple-faced neighbour, committing Kate to her cousin.

"Sweet on her, is he?" said the old gentleman, with a jerk of his whip indicating the young people behind. "Put his nose out of joint sadly once—willing to set it straight again now—eh? He is a fine fellow, and comes of a good stock. Pity if she took up with a town fribble, who would ride with his knees at his chin, and talk of foxes' tails. Lord, what a fall for Bently!"

"Kate has better taste. I have faith in Kate. She will marry at home—not out of the county, at all events."

"There is choice enough in it: but what's against Rous? Keep lands and money in the family."

"Ay; but they are cousins. Mr. Eliot has an invincible repugnance to the marriage of cousins."

"Can't get over their kinship anyhow—but it's a pity. Don't say that I advise it as a general rule, but in this particular instance, all else agreeably converging, I would make 'em an exception."

Ten minutes brought the riders to Hollerby Wold.

"Now, Kate!" cried Miss Buxton.

Kate was not to call twice. But, alas! Kate and Bonnybelle were beaten in half the length of the course. And just as Sprite carried her mistress to the end of it, rang out the view-halloo. Rous clapt spurs to his horse, and was away like the wind, and Miss Buxton with a flourish of her whip sang out in her fine contralto: "Good-by, Kate; we shall meet no more to-day."

It was grand to see the sweep of the hounds in full cry, and of the hunters over the open wold. The low grey clouds had lifted, and a mellow sun tinged the red copses, and dappled the rounded tops of the solitary sheep-walks. Ten minutes more, and the chase had swept out of sight beyond Bently Furrows, though the echoes of it resounded for long after from the plain country towards the river, and those Mitcham Fences that Miss Buxton craned at. Kate followed, but not far. Bonnybelle must not be distressed. More and more remote grew the chime of the hounds, and the melodious twang of the horn; and then the slow-paced people who were out for idle pleasure more than hard sport, dropt off, and took cross-roads and short-cuts home.

Katherine Eliot went leisurely round by the wold-foot, a winding-way with high hedges and great beeches on one side, very beautiful in summer for shade, and on the other unenclosed grazing-ground where the cattle pastured and strayed in herds. It was a pleasant English landscape, and as she approached home, most home-like, peaceful and attractive. The Eliots were a family long in the land, and their estates had never been impoverished by prodigality or neglect. High farming was just beginning to prune away the luxuriant wild grace of lofty hedgerows near Bently, but fine trees still skirted the high-road, and prolonged the double avenue of limes for a quarter of a mile beyond the park-gates.

The Hall was a Jacobean mansion of red brick with stone-dressings; a substantial, warm building,

not modernized, but kept in thorough repair and harmony. From every point of view it was picturesque. Vast irregular chimney-stacks broke the formal sky-line, and deep recesses of shadow were formed by the square advanced bays. The sun shone on the south-front as Katherine rode slowly up the avenue. What a dear, delightful, happy place it was—so her mind ran—and in what profusion the crocuses were coming up through the soft mould in the narrow border at the foot of the walls. Gardener was pruning the standard roses there that would be so beautiful in summer, looking in at the lower windows—Ah! what else would summer bring besides sweet roses?

She dismounted, caressed Bonnybelle, talked nonsense to her for five minutes, and then saw her led away to her stable—poor Bonnybelle that Sprite had defeated so easily. "But I don't love you one bit the less, my beauty; no, I don't," was her mistress's most kind assurance.

Instead of entering the house Katherine sat down on one of the oak-benches in the porch. A view of the church and of the mossy-tiled cottage-roofs of the village closed the vista of the avenue. It was a cheerful prospect, and all the Eliots loved it. These were the rustic homes that their fathers had builded, and the present generation were not the men to thrust the labourer from their gates, to be quit of the burden of him grown old and infirm; nor the men to enlarge their own borders by removing the ancient landmarks, and filching the common rights of their poorer neighbours—reasons, according to the faith they were bred in why their own heritage had not been taken away. Considerate the Eliots were always in their exercise of power and authority —a race that feared God and their own conscience; who had material prosperity after their deserving, and personal trial as He willed.

Personal trial was preparing now. Katherine fancied that it was to be all her own, and felt a little sad as she went indoors. She must either deny her warm heart for Rous, or stand in bold opposition to her father. The alternative seemed very cruel.

"It is impossible—impossible that I can ever cease to love my cousin Rous," she thought within herself.—At seventeen, you see, imagination, exalted by passion, has tenfold the strength of reason, and experience has not come yet to moderate between them.

#### III.

### Mother and Daughter.

As Katherine Eliot ascended the shallow wide stairs conducting to the gallery on which the principal chambers opened, Joyce looked out from the ladies' parlour and called her in.

"Ah! Miss Kate, the mistress wants you. She has been wearying for you this hour."

"Is anything the matter, Joyce?" inquired the young lady calmly.

"No more than is the matter every day, Miss Kate. The mistress talks that she has a fear upon her."

Katherine entered the room holding her habit up and her whip in one hand, as with the other she removed her hat. Her hair, loosened with riding fast, fell down in a mass; she shook her head to throw it back, and dropt into an easy-chair, looking her prettiest against its dark, rippled dishevelment.

Mrs. Eliot lay on the sofa between a window and the fire, still in her morning-wrapper of embroidered cachemire, and with a lace handkerchief tied over her ears. The distress of her countenance, her sighing, querulous manner did not change at Kate's charming aspect. Any person standing by might have seen that she had no pleasure in it.

"Is Joyce there?" was her first question.

"No, mamma. She went away when I came in."

"Glad to be relieved!" said the poor lady with a despondent fall in her voice. "I know it: I have lived too long—I am a burden to myself and to everybody about me. Kate, a sword hangs over us, over all of us! It was a calamity that ever Rous came home from India."

"I don't think so, mamma," rejoined Kate with gentle, sweet significance.

Mrs. Eliot was silent for some minutes. Then she began to mutter: "His uncle says that he will never consent to his marrying Kate. Then Kate must marry somebody else."

"I don't see the necessity, mamma," again Kate interposed, trying to turn this trouble into a merry jest.

"I am thinking of Rous. What good will his leave do him if he is never to find any rest for the sole of his foot? His uncle insists that he must go away from Bently, for Kate's sake. It is very hard upon him, very hard, indeed."

"Rous is happy enough, mamma. We are not

lamentable lovers—don't fret because of us. Time will bring us what is best."

"But how? Every sorrow is sufferable, save remorse. Never do wrong, Kate, in the expectation that it will turn to right."

"Dear mamma, I have promised. I will never disobey papa; but I will not promise to forget my Cousin Rous. Why were we brought together from the ends of the earth, if we were not to love one another?" Kate spoke with warmth, with tremulous vehemence. Mrs. Eliot made her no answer. She had turned her face from the light, and when she did thus, it was a sign that she desired to be left to herself. Kate sat quiet a few minutes longer, and then went away to her own room. She was not a tearful Kate, but her eyes swam. In spite of her confidence in Cousin Rous, and of her serene philosophy of hope and patience, she was strongly moved. For once, her mother's mysterious agitation had infected her.

Joyce surprised her as she stood at her open window in disturbed meditation. The old woman had been her nurse, and the mistress's maid from her marriage. Nothing had happened at Bently for thirty years but Joyce knew it. She was far more tender and caressing to Katherine than her mother, and, as a child, Katherine had resorted to her with

franker confidence. This was wearing off now, and especially since Rous Eliot had declared his love. He was Kate's best friend, and she wanted no other. Instead, therefore, of revealing her griefs and perplexities to Joyce with her face of concern, she dissembled her tears, and was in haste to be rid of her riding-dress, and re-attired for home.

Towards four o'clock, when the gentlemen might soon be expected to return from the hunt, Mrs. Eliot and Katherine were in the red drawing-room, where they always sat of an afternoon in winter, and received callers. Its colouring was warm and soft. It was rich in pictures, oriental china and cabinet ware. At one end it communicated with the diningparlour, at the other with the library. There were statelier rooms on the opposite side of the hall, too large for every-day domestic comfort in the cold season; but the red drawing-room was the perfection of comfort. It made that impression upon visitors, of whom there was an unbroken succession this afternoon—the last afternoon, as it was remembered afterwards, that her friends saw Katherine Eliot surrounded by her innocent pomps and vanities, the spoilt child of that house. Her place was a screened corner by the fire, whence she commanded the centre bay-window, and the drive up to the door,

and gave notice to her mother of who was coming. Her seat was a low velvet chair; a small sculptured ebony stand was at her elbow, bearing the costly requisites of a rich young lady who amuses herself at idle moments with needle-work. Her dress was of fine grey merino, and in her hair she wore a scarlet ribbon. It was often said that she had an artist's taste, and attired herself like a picture.

Hers had been hitherto a much indulged life. No doubt but her prospective honours influenced her thoughts, her feelings, her manners. She was not wont to be contradicted or denied. Rather it was the way of the house to defer to her wishes, and it is even possible that she presumed on her position now and then; for, though not selfish, she was decidedly self-willed. Till Rous and she fell in love there had been no occasion of proving her character, or whether she had any character at all; but then it began to be seen that loving and sweetly reasonable as she was when all went smoothly with her, there ran below the surface a strand of firmness which strengthened the whole warp and west of her nature. Here and there a discerning parent had said: There was a daughter who would have her own way. But nobody suspected yet the high quality of her courage or read in her bright blithe face anything more than the free spirit of a generoustempered and very fortunate young lady. And to no one was Katherine Eliot less known than to herself.

Five o'clock arrived. Orders were given to admit no more visitors. Mrs. Eliot closed her eyes; Kate sat dreaming in charmed security. Their repose was broken by the roll of wheels.

"Another carriage—Dr. Masterman's, mamma," said Kate in the compunctious tone of a kind, considerate soul who does not like to turn away visitors who have driven far.

"No," murmured Mrs. Eliot drowsily; and her orders were not rescinded.

Kate listened. The hall-door had been opened, but not shut again, and the carriage did not go away. Surely she heard her father's voice? She went softly through the library, and peeped into the hall. Yes; there was Mr. Eliot being carefully assisted indoors by two men, the gardener and a stout helper, Dr. Masterman directing them.

"It is a mere trifle, Kate; don't alarm your mother," said the Squire, but he looked very grey.

"It is not much, Miss Eliot, indeed," Dr. Masterman added reassuringly.

With the least noise possible Mr. Eliot was conveyed to his room upstairs. Kate followed unquestioning. Next Joyce appeared, clapped her hands

together in grievous dismay, and cried under her breath: "Whatever you do, don't let the mistress know suddenly. Miss Kate, dear, go down to your mamma, and make as if nothing had happened." On her father repeating: "Yes, go, Kate," she went, but reluctantly, and quaking with undefined apprehensions.

Mrs. Eliot had taken no notice of Katherine's exit, and she took none of her return. She had dropt into a doze, and Kate inexpressibly thankful to avoid observation while herself so disturbed, retired into the bay-window to watch for the coming of her Cousin Rous. He did not long delay. Again she sped to the hall. Rous met her, and asked quickly if his uncle had arrived. Kate told him he was in his own room, and Dr. Masterman with him.

"I was not on the spot when the accident occurred, but Buxton, who was, told me that no bones were broken. The doctor, by good luck, was passing along the road in his carriage, and picked the Squire up. Don Roderick fell with him, but he is not much the worse either. Don't look so sadly serious, sweetheart! What signifies a harmless tumble in the hunting-field?"

Kate did not detain him with explanations. A few more encouraging kind words to her, and he

went upstairs to his uncle. She returned to the drawing-room, and her place by the hearth. It was now dusk, and from the smouldering fire there was a glow but no light. Kate's eyes glittered invisibly, and her mother slumbered on.

Another half hour elapsed. The first dinnerabell rang—the inadvertency of a servant.

bell rang—the inadvertency of a servant.

Mrs. Eliot roused herself with a start; looked up; dimly discerned Kate alone in the gloom, and asked with a gasping impetuosity of suspicion: "Kate, has not your father come in? Where is he? Where is Rous? I am sure something has befallen them?"

long since," replied Kate in a steady voice; but in her effort at unconcern, she absently stooped and stirred the fire. Up sprang the vivid flame, and revealed her countenance of distress.

"Kate, what are you hiding from me?" cried her mother, starting stiffly erect on the sofa."

"It is nothing; mamma," persisted Kate in a composed voice.

A long agonized moan parted Mrs. Eliot's lips. "This pain, this pain!" she wailed, and sat rigid as if struck to stone.

Kate was so scared that for a minute she did not move. Then she ran to the stairs' foot, and ched out: '\*Joyce, Joyce, come to mamma!" The old woman issued promptly from her master's room. "Come to mamma," repeated Kate. "I don't know what ails her."

"I know, Miss Kate," said Joyce, and hurried down to the drawing-room. She would have shut the door as she entered, but Kate, though used to being summarily dismissed from her mother's presence, would not be excluded now.

Mrs. Bliot had not changed her position; that dreadful moan continued. Joyce was by her side in a moment; Kate too. Then it seemed to Kate that her mother's dilated eyes shrank as she came near, and that her hand motioned her away. But she could not understand, could not believe it, till her old nurse said gently, yet impatiently: "Don't you see, Miss Kate; the mistress does not want you? Leave her to me, and go your way and get dressed. There'll be my lord to dinner if there is nobody else."

Kate had no choice but to go; and go she did, with such a miserable chill at heart as she had never experienced in her life before. She might have thought sometimes that her mother did not love her as warmly as most mothers love their girls, but never till now had she seen or imagined the

strange, timid repugnance that she had just witnessed.

Dr. Masterman was leaving Mr. Eliot's room as Katherine came past the door along the gallery. The lamps were lighted on the stairs and in the hall, but the illumination was not very bright. Her consternation escaped remark, and the Doctor spoke to her gaily.

"Ah! Miss Kate, your father is my prisoner for a week. I constitute you his jailor—mind, you keep him safely. You can go in and see him now."

"Tell me first, Dr. Masterman, what is amiss with mamma?"

"With mamma! How should I know! I have not seen her," was the evasive reply.

"I wish you would see her, then—She looks so wild and moans—Oh! moans to make me cry! I never heard it before, but Joyce knows."

"Where is she? I'll go to her, Miss Kate."

Dr. Masterman had dropt his brisk and cheerful manner. He answered no question of the young lady's, but being directed to the drawing-room, he walked straight through the library, and entered unannounced. No need to follow him. Before finally quitting the house, he did answer a question of the old nurse's.

"It is a mortal disease that your mistress suffers under—you have guessed that already. Spare her every annoyance, every excitement. A quiet mind is her only chance from day to day. She ought to have consulted a physician long ago."

"My poor mistress always kept your profession at arm's length, doctor—no parsons and no doctors for her. She never could abide physic, and cant was worse than all to her."

Joyce spoke as if her poor mistress enjoyed her entire sympathy in these aversions. Dr. Masterman made no rejoinder. He was aware of Mrs. Eliot's prejudices, and put upon them a quite private construction of his own.

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Mystery.

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ma Kathering and the Cousin Rous dined: alone;

Never were the two young people so silent rous was in the enjoyment of his natural good spirits, but Kate was out of heart entirely. Her face betrayed it. Her eyes were wan, ther pretty mouth was quite dejected. And Rous could not rally her. He was glad that his uncle's accident was no worse; he did not reflect on Mrs. Eliot's absence—that was not unusual. But Kate was ill at ease, because behind and beyond the acts and events that the whole household knew, she had that day surprised a secret, a mystery, and as yet discerned not the shape of it, but only that its shadow extended towards herself.

When Rous tried to dissipate her dolour she was tempted to tell him whence it arose. He listened and made light of her terrors—"Mysteries, secrets at Bently? She might as well talk to him of ghosts!" Kate was pacified, but not altogether. Still there was comfort in dividing her trouble. A deep root of their love was the long confidence of early use

and custom. Katherine once said that their lives would be all of a piece, woven together throughout, and the beginning and end alike. They, had a thousand innocent recollections in common; and the five years of absence that severed their simplicity from the glorified era of the passions had re-created each for the other as only that era can,

When they adjourned from the dining-parlour to the prisoner upstairs, Kate felt by several degrees happier for having communicated her perplexities to Rous, and he had forgotten them. Both were admitted to Mr. Eliot's room for a little while, and Rous was detained to play a game of chess with his uncle; but when Kate presented herself at her mother's door, Joyce stopped the way.

"Miss Kate, dear, the mistress is not wanting to see anybody more to night. She is better a good bit; but I must have her kept quiet."

Kate hesitated, and listened wistfully whether ber mother would speak to her. Not a word. "I may come in before going to bed?" she inquired.

"We'll, see about that when the time comes," was Joyce's dubious answer.

And with that Kate had to retire. Nor was she admitted at her later appeal. Joyce said her mistress was trying to get a little sleep, and she would not have her lose the chance for the world.

By eleven o'clock the next day Dr. Masterman was at Bently. He reported favourably of the Squire. Mrs. Eliot declined to see him.

"She would not have seen me yesterday of her own good-will?" the Doctor remarked suggestively.

"Perhaps not, sir," was the dry rejoinder of the old nurse who gave the message.

Katherine was gathering snowdrops under the lime-trees when Dr. Masterman left the house. He walked to meet her.

"Mamma will have no one near her but Joyce," she told him. "Last night I was not let in, and I have not been in this morning. I don't understand it. Papa ought to know that mamma is ill, and he does not know."

"He must have his conjectures. But it is not fit nor right that Mrs. Eliot should be without medical advice. She is in a very serious way, Miss Kate. I shall take upon me to acquaint the Squire with my opinion."

"I wish you would. I have told my Cousin Rous that there is some mystery afoot, but he laughs at it as my fancy. Mamma tells me nothing; Joyce has her entire confidence."

"An old nurse is very near to her mistress, and Joyce is a devoted servant. No one else could be of so much use to her. Mrs. Eliot, as I take it, has conceived some fears of her condition, and shrinks from having them confirmed."

Dr. Masterman's words and his grave air made Katherine deeply meditative. Rous had ridden off to Steepleton after breakfast on business of his uncle's, and would not return until late in the day. She was alone until luncheon. After luncheon, being in no humour for visitors, and still denied admittance into her mother's room, she went into the village, and saw a few of the poor people. They were glad of her visits because, as they put it, she had not a bit o' pride, and she never came till past three o'clock of an afternoon, when they had got sided up and sat down.

One of the old bodies she called upon was Dolly Craig, a former cook at the Hall, who had married the landlord of the "Three Bells" at Steepleton, and being "badly left" at his decease, had returned to live at Bently. The strength of her memory and the remoteness of her traditions gave her considerable importance in the village. She had gone as kitchenmaid to the Hall in the Squire's father's time, being then fifteen years old, and had only given up her service there to "undertake matrimony" at forty-five. Katherine loved to set her off on her old stories, and as dearly Dolly loved to tell them.

In reply to Dolly's respectful inquiries Kate gave an account of her father's accident, and of her mother's health, and Dolly began.

"The mistress is in a poorly fashion now-a-days, and what a grand-looking lady she was before you were born, Miss Kate! Many's the time I've said to Joyce, 'The mistress has never been her own woman since little Miss was born."

Kate felt silently aggrieved—this, then, was why her mother loved her so coldly?

"She had a noble way with her before, an' carried her head like a queen. Now she goes creepmouse, and her figure is that shrunken, she looks straight up an' down, like a yard o' pump-water. I don't know who you take after, Miss Kate, but you don't favour your mamma at all, and I can't see that you favour your papa's family either. My lord does; he's a fine young man is Mr. Rous."

Katherine's cheeks responded to this flattery of her lover, and so did her gracious tongue. "Yes, Dolly. And was he not a beautiful boy?"

"He was all that a boy should be, Miss Kate—bold as brass, tell truth an' shame the devil! A bit masterful maybe, but not more than he'd a right. The mistress was very fond of him—as fond of him as if he'd been her own, till her own came."

"My coming did not change that," said Katherine.

"I don't think it did, Miss Kate. I never saw no difference. The Squire, who loved travel, was in the American when you was first spoken about, and the mistress took Joyce, and off to London for the chief doctors. My lord was left with the curate for his learning white they were away. When they came home, they came together, the Squire and his lady, and Joyce with little you in her arms. The mistress seemed but weakly, tho' the Squire was main pleased, and gave us a feast in the village. My lord was as glad as the test, not considering, by reason he was too young, how the bonny, innicent babe would stand in his road. That was you, Miss Kate; I hope it's true, what I hear as you mean to restore him?"

"Nay, Dolly, if you are so over-curious I must fun away!" cried Kate, and was as good as her word.

Of course, Dolly regarded the young lady's flight as tantamount to a confession. The gossips of Bently knew pretty well-how love-matters stood at the Hall, and ranged themselves on the side they expected to win rates on the side of the young people.

Watherine turned her steps towards home. The way stretched straight before her for a considerable distance, and about fifty yards in advance was a tall recolesiastical figure—the figure of Mr. Burns.

Mr. Burns was neither the rector of Bently nor the curate; but a poor scholar, the rector's deputy during a year's leave of absence that the bishop had granted him the previous midsummer. He had dined once at the Hall, but not a second time. He was reserved and absent, and held aloof from society; and as he was only shepherd for a term Mr. Eliot did not seek to convert him to better ways. He was walking at a quick pace, and Katherine, regarding him as a stranger, loitered to let him get well away. At the turn of the road by the Lodge she lost sight of him, but on entering the gates, she saw him again in the avenue, and making direct for the house.

"Ah," she thought, "he is going to inquire for papa; he has heard of his accident." But when the clergyman disappeared into the porch, and did not come out again, she was perplexed.

"Did I not see Mr. Burns come in?" she asked of Quince, the old butler, contemporary with Dolly, who was crossing the hall when she entered.

"Yes, Miss. He has gone up to the ladies' parlour. The mistress sent for him."

Katherine said nothing, but she had never in her life been more amazed. Mrs. Eliot's cynical dislike to a parson was no secret to her daughter. And she had sent for Mr. Burns—here was a portent! Kate did not shape her thoughts into any form, or

try to shape them. She paid her father a visit, found him deeply interested in *The Times*' report of the opening of Parliament, and left him to it. Then she retired to her own room, and there stayed till her Cousin Rous came back from Steepleton.

## Confession.

JOYCE admitted Mr. Burns without a word. The parlour was empty, but through the open door of the chamber beyond he heard a petulant, plaintive cry: "When will this be over!"

The voice was Mrs. Eliot's voice. After the delay of a minute, not more, Joyce motioned him to go forward, and he found himself in the presence of the lady. She was lying half-recumbent on the bed. Her countenance was one of intense wistfulness, anxiety and pain. The poor scholar dropt from the clouds, and tried to bethink himself of spiritual consolations.

"Get it over," whispered Joyce at her mistress's ear. "He is as good as another."

The old woman wore a demure sneer of utter contempt. But Mrs. Eliot was timid, fearful. Her eyes searched Mr. Burns's face as if she would thus mutely inquire what manner of man he was. He took her hand, which she held out to him with

instinctive courtesy, stood silent for an instant, returning her steadfast gaze, and then said: "You have something on your mind?"

"Yes," was her low, panting reply.

If Mr. Burns had been more a student of humanity and less a student of books, he would have known how to help his penitent to a salutary confession. But he could only perform his duties by rote: "The present call upon him was quite novel and in mechanical solemn fashion he proceeded to the recital of the prayers appointed for the visitation of the sick, introducing the special prayer for a person troubled in conscience. Mrs. Eliot gradually recovered her calm under the influence of his professional tone, and by the time he had concluded, her heart in her bosom was cold as a stone. "Mr. Burns was nothing as a ghostly counsellor, and he was made painfully aware of it. The lady did not respond to the prayers, nor seem to observe when they were ended. While he was still on his knees, he was thinking how it would be better to retire from his office of priest, and when he rose, he was all disconcerted and confused: afraid to hear her confession, doubtful whether he ought. He asked if he should leave her then, and see her on the following day. Here, however, Joyce interposed with stiff decision and authority.

"No!" she said peremptorily. "No! Let us have done with this farce! Speak, mistress; or shall I speak for you?"

"The sick woman is able to speak for herself," said the clergyman.

The sick woman prepared to speak accordingly. Only God, whom she feared with trembling, knew how great was the effort to open her lips, now that the supreme moment was come. Mr. Burns compassionated her suffering, and added with simplicity: "But I would remind her that her husband is a true wife's safest confessor."

"I have been a deceitful wife; it is my husband that I have injured. Katherine is not our child," was her rejoinder, all she could utter, and all her secret.

Mr. Burns was the most incurious and inobservant of men. He had been seven months at Bently, and he knew scarcely more of the Eliots now than at his first coming. He glanced interrogatively at Joyce, and murmured: "Delusion?"

Joyce repeated like an echo: "Delusion! so I tell her."

"Oh, Joyce, you are a wicked woman! but for you I should have long ago repented!" cried Mrs. Eliot with excitement.

Joyce raised her eyebrows, and sighed with a

sort of pitiful patience. Mr. Burns seemed to be collecting his faculties, and reconsidering his verdict.

"This is a terrible thing, if there be any truth in it," said he, regarding the nurse.

Joyce replied that there was no truth whatever in it. But her asseveration did not carry conviction to his mind. His intelligence was awakened; he mused, sighed, thought that the guilt was real, and this woman an accomplice in it. His perplexity was very painful to himself. He proposed to think the case over before advising his penitent, and offered to repeat his visit on the morrow.

"You need not come. Nothing is done till I have told my husband," said Mrs. Eliot, and her visage settled into a despondent gloom.

Poor Mr. Burns, sorely abashed and confused, accepted his dismissal, and went. Then the lady renewed her reproaches to her servant. Joyce bore them all with impassive coolness, and only said: "I told you beforehand, dear mistress, that you would never get anybody to believe a word of it. But you have enjoyed the relief of confession, and now let it be. It is a delusion, as Mr. Burns says."

"Delusion! He has put the word into your mouth.
You know that it is no delusion!"

"It has all the look of one. And, mistress dear, Katherine's Trial.

they'll treat you as though you were mad if you keep on about it. It is not a harmless fancy. I do believe it would break the Squire's heart—and who is there to speak to it besides yourself?"

"You are a witness, Joyce. Nature herself is a witness. I never loved the child—her innocent caresses are a torture to me."

Joyce made no rejoinder to this, unless a sigh of weariness might be taken for a rejoinder.

As Mr. Burns passed along the gallery to go downstairs, he met Katherine leaving her room in pretty flowing white evening-dress. The shy man was very unhappy at the moment, but being unable to avoid the young lady, he bowed and was sorry. he said, to have been summoned on so mournful an occasion. Katherine returned his civility, and looking up questioningly, begged to be told what was the matter. He replied that she would know too soon-too soon; then felt nervously that he had done amiss in speaking at all, since he could not speak openly. Katherine understood him to mean that her mother was ill, and in imminent peril, and her sweet bright face was all over-clouded suddenly. She had seen her Cousin Rous ride round to the stables, and was on her way downstairs when she encountered Mr. Burns. The incident diverted her intention, and she knocked at her father's door. She

was bidden to come in, and to give an account of herself, and of any news that she had heard in the village. Mr. Eliot found his confinement irksome already; his pain was alleviated, and he was impatient for his release.

"It seems a week since yesterday morning, Kate, and your mother has not been to see me yet. Is she so very suffering?"

"I am afraid, papa, that she is much worse than we have any notion of. She sent for Mr. Burns this afternoon."

"Sent for Mr. Burns! What can have possessed her to send for Mr. Burns!" Mr. Eliot was more amazed than expectant of an answer. He and Katherine gazed at one another in mute wonder and conjecture.

When Rous appeared he was taken into counsel. He was not very serious:—Mrs. Eliot's whims and oddities were too numerous and too trivial to need any explanation but that of nervous caprice—so he considered. Kate called him unfeeling, but was reassured notwithstanding. The Squire seemed also to accept his nephew's conclusion, (Dr. Masterman had not yet found opportunity to warn him of his wife's health,) and began to inquire what success had attended Rous's business at Steepleton. This

did not concern Kate, and she left them to its discussion.

Again that evening the young people dined by themselves, but Rous had a fund of Steepleton gossip to detail, and they forgot the flight of time in lively conversation until a message arrived from Mr. Eliot that he was waiting for his game of chess. Katherine, left alone, tried to put on the evening with a book, and went to rest early. By eleven o'clock all the house was quiet, and nobody waking except in Mrs. Eliot's room. There Joyce was still on guard. Her mistress wished her to go to bed; for she had been up the whole of the night before. But the old woman was resolute to stay where she was.

Mrs. Eliot reflected a little, and said: "Do you fear that I shall die suddenly, Joyce?"

"I fear nothing, and do you fear nothing either, mistress dear," rejoined the nurse. "Death won't take you unawares—I'm not expecting that; but the pain is cruel when it gets hold, if there is nobody by to give you what you want. I am not so tired but I can sit up to-night, and I mean to sit up."

Mrs. Eliot said no more, but as she mused a suspicion came into her mind. She felt convinced that death, so far as the execution of deferred purposes was concerned, would give her brief warning.

And she believed that Joyce would hinder her repeating her confession to her husband if she could. Distrust of her confederate, once imagined, grew quickly, and a terror with it. Had the old woman, so long devoted, begun to take thought for herself, and to consider how it might fare with her, this treachery revealed and her mistress gone? And then arose a vehement desire to circumvent her policy.

The night wore on. After some hours Joyce dozed in her chair. Being undisturbed, from dozing she sank into sound slumber. Then Mrs. Eliot rose softly, and passed through the parlour into the room where her husband lay. The fire was low, but a shaded porcelain lamp stood on a table near it, with the chess-men on the board, the game unfinished.

"Louisa!" said the Squire, rousing at her approach.

"Yes, Edward, it is I. Hush, I have something to say to you." Mrs. Eliot spoke in breathless gasps.

"Leave it till to-morrow."

"No, I may be dead before to-morrow." Her husband said afterwards that a fear of what she was going to say entered his mind before she spoke. He had a guess. "Edward, Katherine is not our child—I never had a child. It was all a deceit from the beginning."

"Go back to your bed, Louy! What insane nonsense is this?" whispered the Squire, and yet all the time he believed it. She sighed deeply, and he added with a testy kindness: "You are standing with your bare feet on the floor. Go back to your bed now, and you shall tell me all about it in the morning."

She went as noiselessly as she had come, and found Joyce still sleeping. She slept herself now, and did not wake again until daylight was fully come.

"You are better, mistress; you have got a good rest," said the faithful nurse, the moment she opened her eyes.

"I have got that off my mind. Last night when you were asleep, I crept into my husband's room and told him."

Joyce was silent for the space of a minute. Then she said with a sorrowful contempt: "Off your mind and on his—what wonderful great love! Eh! mistress, you're nigh escaping the consequences; but there is the master bereaved of his daughter, and there's Miss Katherine bereaved of her father, and made everybody's gazing-stock. You may sigh and sigh, but as you made the blunder and kept the

secret of it for seventeen years, and they were happy, not knowing aught, you should have gone to your grave with it. I see no merit in your confession. Did the master forgive you?"

Mrs. Eliot did not answer. The chapter of her confession was begun, but not ended.

## VI.

## Revelation.

What Mr. Eliot did will be the briefest elucidation of what he felt on receiving his unhappy wife's confession. In the morning Quince saw that his master had not rested so well as he ought, and that he was worn with an accession of pain in his injured limb. But the Squire gave his orders as usual, sent Katherine a French letter from the post-bag, and a message to Rous that he was to go up after breakfast.

"I hope you will not have another errand to Steepleton to-day, unless papa will let me ride with you," said Kate, and her cousin frankly acquiesced in the wish.

When Rous presented himself in his uncle's room half-an-hour later, he found him up and dressed, but with a visage so grey and weary that he could not forbear an exclamation of grieved surprise.

"It is not my limb only," said Mr. Eliot, and his very voice was changed. Rous glanced at the letters strewn on the table, opened and unopened, but his uncle, following the direction of his eyes, added: "It is nothing from abroad either.—See that the door is shut—yes, draw the bolt.—I have had a blow, Rous, a cruel, cruel blow. It concerns you mainly in the future; that is why I take you into confidence first of all."

Rous understood that some very serious revelation impended. He stood leaning with one elbow on the mantel-piece, and his uncle and he looked each other straight in the face while it was being made.

"The impediment to your marriage with Katherine is removed—you are not cousins," were Mr. Eliot's next words.

Rous seemed bewildered. "How so, sir?" said he.

"Katherine is not my child, nor my wife's child—is not our child at all. You are where you were seventeen years ago; and when I drop Bently will be your father's. It may not be very long; for this has cut me, Rous, cut me past telling."

The young man had not breath to reply, so immense, so oppressive was his dismay. When he did find words to utter, he spoke like himself, with a glowing colour in his face, and a burst of generous impetuosity: "Cannot we keep this secret amongst us, sir? It shall make no change in me.

You give me Kate, and it will make no difference to her. She need never know it."

Mr. Eliot shook his head. "She must know it all the world must know it. Such a thing cannot be hidden."

Rous had not the heart to question his uncle, but he learnt, by degrees, how the confession had been made, and the probability that it had been previously made to Mr. Burns, coupled with the certainty of the circumstances being all within the knowledge of Joyce.

"Katherine bears a spirit. She will be bitterly humiliated, even as I am," said the Squire with woeful countenance.

"I am thinking how it may be lightened to her, sir."

"Make no rash vows, Rous. Your father must be written to."

"Who is to tell Kate? I left her happy with a letter from Madame Roussel. There need be no haste to spread the news. I wish it could be kept from her altogether at present—until our marriage is arranged, or even over?"

"No, no! Katherine would hardly forgive you, though you might plead that you had deceived her for her good. With some such excuse my poor wife must have practised on her conscience. It is not necessary that Kate should be told to-day, nor to-morrow, perhaps—I myself know only the bald fact as yet. Oh, Rous! the treachery of all these years!"

Mr. Eliot covered his face, and his nephew was silent for keenness of sympathy.

When Dr. Masterman arrived midway the morning he was far from satisfied with his patient's progress. The natural reply to his inquiries was a revelation of the past night's event.

"How much that was mysterious this explains!" was his comment on it. "I have long suspected a secret in Mrs. Eliot's life, but my thoughts never turned to Miss Katherine. The poor young lady is much to be pitied."

"We are all much to be pitied: we are in a great straight," said the Squire with a despondent fall in his voice.

"There are many ways out of it—you must not give up. The first thing is your recovery. With your fine constitution a little accident is of no importance, but if you let yourself down you will give me trouble."

The Squire sat drooping, his hands on his knees, his visage pallid, dejected, quite unlike himself. "I shall never rally, doctor; never look the world in the face again—She was the only woman I ever

loved." He talked of his wife for some time, recalling the early period of their marriage, her beauty, their patient hope, and then their disappointment of offspring, and how she would bemoan herself, when news came of an heir born in a neighbour's house, and cry that such an one was the mother of a fair son, and she was but a barren stock. "Her affection, her pride exaggerated my regrets, and so she must have been tempted to conspire against our honour. Poor soul! poor soul!" The wound was mortal. Mr. Eliot looked old all at once, and spoke as if forewarned that nothing would soon be left him but to forgive.

Rous was still in the room, and hardly yet recovered from his bewilderment. A glimpse of Katherine wandering alone in the garden, and culling here and there a flower, reminded him of how long he had left her; and with an intimation to his uncle that he would return presently, he went out to join her.

"That eternal chess!" cried Kate with a reproachful gesture, advancing to meet him.

"Sometimes an unexpected move in the game sets one considering so long what move next," said Rous with a double meaning.

"And Dr. Masterman interrupted you? I saw him come. I was going upstairs to read Maddie's letter to mamma. Joyce professes that she is better, but she did not let me in." "Maddie" signified Madame Roussel, Katherine's old French governess.

They stood still in the sun, full in view of Mr. Eliot's window, Kate sorting her flowers, and Rous holding the basket, while they talked together. The Squire looked out and saw the two figures with the light and brightness of the morning upon them. Dr. Masterman observed them too, and said that the love which subsisted between the young people pointed to a happy solution of the dilemma that had been discovered to him. Mr. Eliot did not acquiesce in the suggestion; he knew with whom he had to deal, and that more than one had an independent will.

"We cannot reckon without my brother—he will not easily consent to their marriage. Natural prejudice must be taken into account. His first inquiry will be: Who is Katherine? Poor Kate, I must not leave her dependent on anybody's consideration. To-morrow when you come, give Morgan a lift in your carriage. I will send Rous to summon Jacques for eleven o'clock. This dreadful business must be substantiated before witnesses, and the sooner the better. Then I will make provision for Katherine."

"That is no more than just. She is innocent of

the fraud, and if she lose her lover, as well as her fortune, her case will be cruel indeed!"

Dr. Masterman took a practical view of the situation. He saw its bearings the more clearly for not having any personal interest in it. He assumed that the revelation would not, and ought not to make any difference in Katherine's position while Mr. Eliot lived.

"It shall not, so far as my kindness can defend her; but there is no guessing how she may take it herself," said the Squire. "Who is to tell her? How is she to be told at all?"

"Leave it to Mr. Rous," was the doctor's advice.
"He will give her the sweet with the bitter."

When Dr. Masterman left the house, Mrs. Eliot sent Joyce with a message to ask if her husband would receive her, and the answer being favourable, she went to him, and for an hour was occupied in answering in slow detail the inquiries he put to her on her confession. The ordeal was painful to both, but most to him. There had long existed in Mrs. Eliot a curious insensibility to all suffering except her own; and it would have been a miracle had she awakened now to an acute sense of the mortification, perplexity and distress that she had created. The Squire was very gentle and reasonable with her—it was of no use to be otherwise; reproaches

would not alter facts. Joyce delivered her testimony with cynical hardihood in support of her mistress's confession. Their league in treachery had been close and intimate, and the old nurse did not scruple to assert that she would never have broken it: "No, not even that my lord might come by his rights again!" There was a time to speak and a time to be silent. She loved Miss Kate—Miss Kate had always been a good and docile bairn to her, and she should be sorry to see her put out of her place. She was sorry also for the cloud that would fall on the family—Yes, she thought telling the tale now was worse than the original sin. Conscience? She made no account of conscience, not she!

At this point Katherine was heard coming upstairs, singing as she came. Rous called to her from below: "Kate, we must ride after luncheon; Bonnybelle has been out exercising since breakfast."

"The darling beauty! Very well, Rous!" cried Kate in answer. Evidently they had been taking in hand to settle their affairs for the day.

There was silence in Mr. Eliot's room. Kate stopped at the door, and knocked. "Is she to come in?" said Joyce.

"Certainly," replied the Squire, and in Kate

came, the blush of fresh air on her cheeks, and its cool deep lustre in her eyes.

Both paled at the sight of her father: she loved him dearly; he had been ever most indulgent to her, except in the matter of her Cousin Rous. "Oh! poor papa, I am sure that strain is hurting you dreadfully," said she with alarmed tenderness. Her unsuspicious mind was struck only by the physical expression of his pain, and she went over and sat by him, peering with inquisitive kindness into his face. He did not evade her scrutiny, but acknowledged that he was enduring a good deal of uneasiness.

Mrs. Eliot muttered plaintively: "I have upset you, Edward. I will go and lie down again," and she rose from her chair.

"You are better, mamma, I can see," said Kate. "Ever so much better! Won't you come to luncheon? *Please*, don't mope! Joyce, can there be any need for mamma to be shut up?"

"Talk of what you understand, Miss Kate, and don't be so quick to judge from appearances. Your mamma has got over the worst of her attack for this time, but she is far from well yet." Joyce spoke quite in her usual way, and her master could not but ponder how easy the practice of deceit was to her. Long impunity had made it a habit with both

mistress and maid. As Kate appealed to her mother not to mope, she kissed her without repulse. Only the Squire showed a change.

"If mamma must be shut up, is it necessary that I should be shut out?" persisted Kate, as the two were retiring.

Mrs. Eliot, smiling in her nervous, mechanical manner, said: "No, Kate—you can come to me whenever you please."

Her husband looked at her. Their eyes met his full of inscrutable sorrow and indignation. When she gained the privacy of her chamber, she whispered, trembling before the coolness of her confederate, that her punishment was not over yet.

"I don't expect it is," said Joyce. "I expect it will last you your life. You'll begin to feel for others now you've saved your own soul. I should like to know, mistress, what good you think you have done by confessing? The master will never be his own man again, never! He's struck to the heart. And there's to-morrow, and Miss Kate. I wish that was over—she'll not bear it so patiently."

Mrs. Eliot wept, but Joyce was, for the moment, proof against such easy emotion, and offered no comfort. Her faithfulness to her mistress admitted of sympathy with those whom her mistress had injured. If she had feared at all for herself before

Katherine's Trial.

the revelation was made, she feared nothing now. Her hardihood was almost respectable. She would neither extenuate nor deny any detail of her guilt. She had aided the wrong-doing of her mistress, and had perpetuated it when her mistress would have repented. Now the secret was out, she was ready to abide the consequences—would have been willing to suffer a double penalty, if by that means her master and Miss Katherine might have escaped. Her torture consisted in unavailing love and pity, made bitter by remorse. She set her face like a flint, but her heart was gnawed upon by a sharp and malignant tooth; and when she saw the idle tears of her mistress, a contemptuous rage prevailed over her long custom of affection and respect.

That afternoon, with Mr. Eliot's leave, Rous and Katherine rode over to Cleghorn together—a pleasant ride by country lanes and bridle-roads across the fields. Kate was too gay and light-hearted to speculate much on her father's indulgence. It was so natural for her to be happy that she felt no surprise when the course of their true love promised to run smoother than its wont.

Cleghorn was the residence of Mr. Jacques. They met the old gentleman in the pastures which gave the air of a park to his modest domain, and were greeted with a cordial regard. But when Mr.

Jacques learnt, in an aside from Rous, his neighbour's message that he was wanted at Bently the next morning to meet Dr. Masterman and Mr. Morgan, his jovial visage grew overcast. An accident was a serious thing at Mr. Eliot's years, how slight soever it appeared in the beginning-so he reflected, and muttered to himself: "Hum-m-m! my mind misgives me that it is about his will?" Rous said his uncle's will was concerned in the business, but it was a graver matter even than his will. Mr. Jacques glanced shrewdly at the young man and then at Katherine, who, perceiving that her Cousin Rous had a private communication to make, had cantered over the grass to some distance. In the few minutes that it took them all to reach the house. Mr. Jacques had heard the pith of Mrs. Eliot's declaration, and was prepared for the duty of the following day. Rous had been bidden by his uncle to give him this warning. The old gentleman received it without comment. It was not in foxhunting human nature to be sorry that Bently should fall to this fine young man rather than to a girl, but it was not the time for congratulations to the heir.

The young people dismounted, and were conducted by Mr. Jacques himself to the drawing-room. His buxom old wife received them with warmth,

for she was entirely in their interest; "I never saw the dear girl look brighter or more confident of her joy, pretty creature that she is!" she told her gossips when inquired of later respecting this afternoon's visit. "And you would never have guessed that Mr. Rous knew anything. He was just as usual, and Miss Buxton and he had some joke between them that I could not make out, only Miss Katherine blushed, and seemed shy about it."

The joke was that Miss Buxton having been let into the lovers' confidence by means of Kate's "idea" on the hunting morning, used her privilege to catechize them of their progress since. "I see you are having it all your own way. The cat's shut up and the mice go play—naughty mice!"

Rous laughed, but Kate pleaded: "Papa sent us—really and truly," and looked quite shamefaced when Miss Buxton feigned unbelief of her earnest assurance, and reiterated with merry rebuke, "Naughty mice! naughty mice!" which small wit amused them until Mr. Jacques suddenly took Rous by the arm, and carried him off.

"I hope Mr. Rous is not the messenger of bad news, Miss Katherine?" said the lady of the house.

"There is no bad news that I know of," was Kate's reply.

"I fancied that my husband was put out—as if he had heard something that distressed him."

By the next day at evening that something was known throughout the county: and the tongues of the world's gossips were busy enough.

The witnesses summoned by Mr. Eliot arrived at Bently at the appointed hour, and met in the ladies' parlour—Mr. Jacques and Dr. Masterman, Mr. Morgan the magistrates' clerk, and Mr. Burns. Rous would have absented himself with Katherine, but his uncle required his presence. Katherine was told nothing beforehand, but she was allowed to understand that there was business afoot, and that there would be tidings for her by and by.

"That will grieve me, Rous?" she asked him on the stairs as he went up.

He said frankly: "Yes—that cannot help but grieve you, Kate."

"I will go to my own room, and stay there till I am called," announced she in a troubled whisper.

"Do, Kate, I will call you myself. It is a sorrow for us all, but not a sorrow without hope."

"Will it come between us two?" she asked, laying her hands softly on his coat.

"Never, Kate," was his solemn asseveration.

She held up her sweet face flushed with emotion, and he kissed her. "Then," said she, "I can hear it."

It was one of those sunny soft mornings of early spring that lighten insensibly the burdens of the common day. Katherine felt that she was happy even under the impending cloud. She had no conjecture what it was that lowered so close and dark, but thoughts of her love touched it with gleams of rose-colour. Suspense, curiosity, anxiety, she had none. Rous had promised to call her when the time came, and he would keep his word. It might be three-quarters of an hour or it might be an hour after, that she heard his voice at her door: "Kate, put on your hat, and come into the garden." Her hat was on in a moment, and her red gipsy cloak, and she presented herself with a smile on her face.

Rous stood against the balustrade of the gallery looking on the hall below where the other gentlemen were talking in grave, low tones. Mr. Eliot's door stood wide open, and Joyce was just coming out. Her countenance was angry and confused, but at the sight of Katherine in her blitheness, she suddenly collapsed into violent weeping.

"Nurse, nurse, what ails you? what dreadful

thing is the matter?" cried Kate, and laid hold of her affectionately.

"They talk of sending me to prison—me! Let them send me to prison; but let them send your mamma too, for she was the beginning of it!" said the old servant in a voice broken with misery.

"Come with me, Kate; it is all one story," interposed Rous, trying to separate them.

"I cannot leave nurse in this way, dear! What does she mean?"

Joyce cried aloud, and Katherine, repulsing her cousin, led her into her own room. In those few minutes all the glow and tender serenity of her imagination gave place to a sick pallor of fear. "Now speak, nurse, speak quickly, or I think I shall die," said she.

The old woman looked up in her face, and answered her: "Miss Katherine, this is what it is—you don't belong to Bently. You are a fondling, like. It was the mistress, and me helping her, brought you in here; and now she has told all, and my lord is the heir again."

Rous heard Katherine's rejoinder: "Mamma used to push me off when I was little and wilful, and say: "Go, Kate, you are no child of mine!' And it was true?"

"Yes, my joy, it was true. But don't let it

break your heart. The master loves you the same as ever."

"And I have no father, no mother?" cried the bereaved girl.

Rous called to her again: "Kate, Kate, I want you!"

And then she came to him with a most pitiful face, asking: "Is it true?"

He told her that it was true, and she passed him to enter the Squire's room. Rous followed her in; heard her reiterate her pathetic inquiry: "Is it true?" and heard her receive the same reply. Mr. Eliot was more collected than either of the young people. He tried to speak reasonably to Katherine, promising that she should not be sensible of any loss that he could save her. His compassionate, gentle expostulation was more than she could bear. She turned to go away, and when Rous would have kept her, she said: "Let me alone. To-morrow I will listen to you. All the world is changed for me. I want to consider."

"I am not changed, Kate, remember that in your considering," he urged with loverly pathos.

"Dear Rous, you were always good," said she, and gave him her hand, and so with averted, tearful face tried to escape.

"Have you not a word for me, Katherine?" said

Mr. Eliot. And then she turned, and knelt at his feet; weeping, and thanking him for the love of which she said she had been all unworthy. He caressed her fondly, and his own voice shook as he assured her that nothing could ever be changed between them. "You have been my dear little daughter for seventeen years, and you must be my daughter all the days of my life. Now go, and cry your cry out."

In the midst of her confused, bewildering sensations of grief and solitariness, Katherine experienced a thrill of joy.

## VII.

## Life out of Joint.

"It is to be hoped that they will be wise at Bently, and not give the devil the advantage, as people in an ugly trouble are so apt to do," was Mr. Morgan's private reflection as he took his way back to Steepleton after the business of this grievous day. The magistrates' clerk had the experience of a long life to fall back upon in his philosophic musings. He had been witness to the opening of many skeleton-closets, he knew the wrong side of much family tapestry, he had assisted at the prudent covering of more than one bitter and secret shame.

It is curious to observe how the smooth surface of events is stirred when such a history breaks upon the world as this history of Mrs. Eliot's endeavour to compensate her husband for the want of children. It was like a stone flung with a violent hand into a pool of stagnant water. It sank, but it moved the still waters where they were most foul, moved them to their depths, and filled society with their evil odours. The commotion extended in ever-

widening eddies. The folly of it! the idiotic folly of it! was the common cry. But when is guilt, when is wickedness otherwise than folly? What hoary scandals were dragged to bank to match it! what cunning shifts, cruel expedients, vile atrocities that had settled out of sight for years and generations, and now made the world's talk again for nine days with the new wonder.

Mr. Morgan was not the only neighbour by many who hoped that the people at Bently would have courage left to withstand the devil in their great calamity. It might be used in so many ways—turned to mischief and misery ever-during—turned to reproachless pity and love more constant and forbearing. It was a source of general speculation, but it warranted no interference, no condolence. Calls were made and cards were left at the door for the ladies of the family in the customary manner, but no one was admitted to see them. Old Quince looked wooden as usual: Mrs. Eliot was always engaged; Miss Katherine was always out.

Indoors the excitement of the great shock passed and left a great blank. Mrs. Eliot kept herself secluded. The peril of Joyce passed harmless; she was necessary to her mistress, and it never appeared to her subordinates that she had forfeited either trust or privilege. Mr. Eliot came downstairs at the week's end, met his neighbours again, and went about his ordinary business, but he fell into the habit of referring decisions to his nephew. Katherine was there, but quite another Katherine. Not even Rous could win her to peaceful thoughts. She could not speak to him or to Mr. Eliot but her eyes filled with tears. The graceful sweet audacities that had been her charm were forgotten; she grew shy and reserved, and what had seemed like pride in her before was exaggerated.

No man in the county was better liked or more respected than Mr. Eliot of Bently. His wife also had been much considered, and Katherine was a universal favourite --- youth, beauty, good-humour and good fortune had all combined to exalt her popularity. Not a voice but pitied her sorrowful case; yet soon people began to wonder what would They were concerned to know happen next. whether the young lady would stay at Bently, and whether Mr. Rous Eliot would be so eager to marry her since they had changed places. The pet opinion was that he would; but there were a few oracular dissentients who said: "Hum," and so were prepared to be right either way. Another and very natural topic of discourse was: Where did the young

lady spring from? A silly self-conscious body who had done Katherine the honour of standing sponsor at her christening went about seeking pity for herself and saying: "How very awkward for me!" until she was advised, being rich and solitary, to take the poor girl into her own house, and make a companion of her. But she could not think of such a thing, she said, until it was ascertained in a formal and authentic manner what Katherine's origin really was.

A score of idle legends were invented and circulated while the facts were only in possession of a few intimate friends of the family. Joyce had announced them before the competent witnesses summoned by Mr. Eliot to hear his wife's declaration; and Mr. Morgan had been occupied since in investigating the truth of her statement.

Briefly, her statement was this:-

Katherine was neither dropt on a door-stone nor found in a ditch. She was the child of two as simple, pretty young people as ever married in haste to please themselves, and repented at leisure for the gratification of their friends. His name was John Fenwick, and he was a student of art. Her name was Kate, and she died when their baby was born. The poor boy, her husband, then went away to his native home at Eversley, entrusting the baby

to the woman with whom they had lodged until he could persuade his mother to forgive him and receive it. His mother, a widow, and in narrow circumstances, was not easily to be propitiated. Here Mrs. Eliot and Joyce came on the scene, and were told the moving story. They were there with a certain design. It suited Mrs. Eliot to take the child, and call it her own. The woman let John Fenwick know, and let his mother know that it was dead. Her word was believed, and the whole plot was accomplished. Mrs. Eliot was carried to Bently in triumph, Joyce was secret as the grave, and their confederate did not molest them. Mr. Morgan succeeded in finding this person, and her reluctant testimony substantiated every incident and particular already confessed to by the others.

There appeared no one at the present date to dispute Katherine's adoption at Bently. Mrs. Fenwick had been dead twelve years (Mr. Morgan saw her grave in St. Olave's churchyard at Eversley), and her son had since been lost sight of in his native city. It was ascertained that he had gone abroad, and his sketches of Italian life and land-scape were familiar to picture-dealers and collectors in London; but through none of the ordinary channels of inquiry could a clue be obtained to his actual whereabouts. He had sent no pictures home

since the previous winter, and his last consignment was from Venice.

Thus far Mr. Morgan's positive information, and he shrewdly refused to supplement it by conjecture. "Conjecture is the wildest guide you can take in the pursuit of facts," said he, when detailing to Mr. Eliot the last word of the tragi-comedy. "If your object is to find John Fenwick, you must seek him in Italy, patiently tracing the thread that has been put into your hand."

Mr. Eliot looked serious and oppressed. His good easy neighbour Mr. Jacques advised him to let well alone, and leave this John Fenwick in the dark, lest, when brought to light, he should prove an inconvenient person, and such as none of them could be proud of. He thought Katherine was perfectly safe; he did not believe in the hereditary transmission of vices and virtues; he believed in good and bad training, and Katherine had had her training good. Rous, who had never reflected on the matter, professed to be of the same creed, until Katherine, to whom each discovery was reported as it took place, convinced him that she should never taste of peace while anything remained to be revealed; and then he came round to her opinion that it was best all should be known that could by

searching be found out. For a secret fear is the canker of all joy.

For a first desire Katherine wished to visit Eversley—her father's birthplace. Surely, she said, there would be some one there who would remember him. Mr. Morgan was afraid not, but as her desire was easy of gratification nobody felt inclined to say her nay. In the lengthening spring days it was possible to go to Eversley and return between morning and night, and one cold March morning Mr. Eliot made the journey with her. Katherine had never seen Eversley before, and it was many years since the Squire had been there. They made their way over the bridge towards the Minster. The streets were busy and cheerful. There were the shops and the multifarious things to sell that people do not want. All in a flash of sunshine a troop of scarlet dragoons came riding between the tall old houses, with a blare of trumpets and rattle of drums. There was the walk by the river, and the elms that make summer shade, and at last, there was the Minster Yard, and the bells all clanging, high up in the windy tower.

Mrs. Fenwick and her son had had their abode in one of the dim cloistered houses in College Lane. They found it from the description they had

heard. It was a little bit of a one-time great house, quite in a corner, with no view of the Minster, and only a glimpse of the Precentor's garden from the windows upstairs. They could hardly hear each other speak for the noise of the bells, and they stood wondering who lived in it now. They had not wondered long when an elderly gentleman came out in a fuss—a clergyman from the rusty black coat of him. Katherine ran forward, and with a breathless apology, begged to know if he had been acquainted with a widow of the name of Fenwick who occupied that house twelve years ago. The gentleman gave a negative shake of the head. have only lived eighteen months in Everslev myself," he said, "but I can tell you where information concerning old inhabitants is to be had. There is a verger at the Minster, Old Job, a living chronicle of the ecclesiastical tenants—we are all ecclesiastical tenants hereabouts."

"Mrs. Fenwick was the widow of one of the vicars-choral."

"Then rely upon it, Old Job can tell you all about her!"

Katherine's impulse of inquiry had taken Mr. Eliot by surprise. He had thought this expedition a whim, a romantic caprice. But there was method in her seeking. "I do want to find out," said she,

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They entered the Minster by the great south door. So vast it was, so beautiful, with the bright sun shining through the stained windows of nave and aisle, transept and choir and clerestory, that Katherine stood at gaze in joyful contemplation. She thought that here her father had learnt, perhaps, to be a painter. Very few people were about. The morning-service was over; the evening-service some hours off yet. But one of the vergers was on duty, Old Job for good-luck, and he came tottering up with his silver poker, to ask if they desired to see the Minster. Mr. Eliot said "Yes;" and as they were conducted hither and thither-to the Chapter-House resplendent with colour and gold, to the Lady-Chapel adorned with finely sculptured tombs, to the Treasury rich in famous relics,—some little information was acquired beyond the card; but it was necessary to come to the point, and to name names to get at the real stores of Old Job's knowledge. In reply to direct questions he was ready enough:-

Yes, he had known Mrs. Fenwick, but he had known her husband and son better. Mrs. Fenwick was not so easy to know; she was one of those good ladies who kept herself to herself. Her husband was reckoned, in his time, the best voice in the Minster—Dr. Rolandi, the organist that was, would tell

them the same. John—he meant no disrespect, but he had known him from a boy in crimped frills, with his books in a strap and his bag o' marbleswas a little lively chap, with a whistle like a blackbird's; full of fun, always up to his pranks and mischief, he was. He would be an artist, and Dr. Rolandi, who had friends in that line, took a deal of notice of him; so did Miss Rolandi, who could speak to that time more than he-Old Job-could; for they were much of a muchness as to age, and were often together before John went to study in London. He was only a bird of passage in Eversley after that. Job did think once he might mate and settle at home, but the old lady, his mother, was stiff, and Dr. Rolandi got his stroke that disabled him from his office of Minster-organist, and his daughter was not for leaving him-there was a sort o' mystery about it, so he'd heard, but all might not be true. And he'd understood after that John was gone into foreign parts.

No doubt the old verger pondered who the country gentleman and pretty young lady might be whose questions were so close, pertinent and earnest. Mr. Eliot gave him a triple fee, and he put them into the road to Dr. Rolandi's house—for thither also Katherine must go. It was in the Minster Yard, a spacious house, retired in a court, faded

from its better days, but still imposing. They were shown into a long music-room, with windows open on a sunny garden terrace, where an old gentleman, very infirm, sat by the fire, wrapt in a fur-lined cloak. A handsome, brown-complexioned lady, his daughter, rose from the piano where she was playing and singing as they entered; and when they mentioned John Fenwick, and explained their request, her fine countenance lighted up as with pleasant recollections.

"Not," she said, "that I can afford you any present information of that vagrant personage, though we were every-day friends and neighbours long ago. It is full ten years since I have had a letter from John Fenwick—he only wrote to me once from Italy when he returned there after his mother's death. He was a good young fellow, and had a great genius."

"A pretty talent, Maggie, a pretty talent, nothing more," interposed Dr. Rolandi, lifting a pair of shrewd eyes to her face.

"Ah, that was always our quarrel about John!" rejoined his daughter cheerfully, though she sighed in speaking.

"You have some sketches of his somewhere—let the young lady see them, since she is interested in John. I wish he did not forget his old friends." "You must come to my room if you are to see the sketches," Miss Rolandi said, holding out a hand of invitation to Katherine, and she rose to lead the way.

Mr. Eliot stayed where he was, and while the ladies were absent, he briefly explained to Dr. Rolandi the motive of their visit and inquiries. The old organist was lost to nearly all interests but those of his personal comfort; he made an inarticulate answer, shivered, and begged to have the window next him closed, remarking that there was not yet much power in the sun. His visitor was relieved to have so quickly done with his own apologetic announcements; he was himself too old in experience to be surprised at seeing how immaterial to persons outside his family was the event so large-looming, so momentous and so sad within it.

"I am tired," said Miss Rolandi simply as she and Katherine ascended the wide shallow oaken stairs. "All this morning I have been giving lessons. This evening I have to sing at the choral-concert. I was practising one of my songs when you came." They turned down a long passage to a door at the further end. "This is my room, it is a long way to bring you; we used to be a large family—it is almost an empty house now, only papa and me in it. And these are John Fenwick's two

sketches—scenes at Verona—immature work, perhaps, but full of spirit and freshness. His later and more finished pictures are not more charming."

They were very lovely—a sunrise and sunset over the city with a distance of mountains and garden foregrounds. "If ever I see Verona I shall know the place by those cypresses," said Katherine.

Miss Rolandi was watching her, somewhat curiously amused. "And now, since I have shown you the secrets of my treasure-house, which are no secrets, tell me—What is John Fenwick to you?" she asked.

"He is my father," answered Kate trembling, and she told her own story in half-a-dozen lines.

The glowing colour had risen to Miss Rolandi's face. "If you are John Fenwick's daughter I may kiss you for his sake," said she, and kissed her on the lips, looking into her eyes for a minute after. "You are not much like him, you are more like his mother. And you are going in search of him? When you find him, say, that there are still one or two people at Eversley who think of him kindly, always think of him very kindly, though he seems to have forgotten them."

Katherine was free to imagine what she liked, to conjecture what she liked, but this was all that she was told. They went away. They heard the roll of the organ in the Minster as they drew near, but there was not time to go in. "If we stay for the service it will be dark night before we reach Steepleton," said the Squire, "and there is the drive home after." But Katherine looked wistfully back as if she would like it, and he indulged her.

Oh, the glorious music to her unused ears! the music and the chanting, the glad songs of praises, and the anthem that was a joyful prayer! She would remember it, and give thanks for it all her life long! It seemed as if God had spoken to her by His servants, had bidden her put her trust in Him; had bidden her be comforted and rejoice always. She felt as strong and as happy again as she did in the morning. Her trouble and humiliation were lightened by one half.

"Oh, papa, this has been a good day!" she said, when they were, at last, seated in the carriage on their cold road home. "Not a lost day, has it? We can figure to ourselves what my father must have been like, and need not be afraid to find him."

"But I am more and more afraid, Kate; I begin to discern a rival in him," replied the Squire in a rueful voice. "I portend weariful pilgrimages in his quest. There is no more bar of cousinship between you, so better give ear to Rous, my pet, and make yourself independent of fathers, and us independent of your freaks."

"Ah, no, papa, you don't mean it! you cannot mean it!"

"I do mean it very sincerely, Kate. This has been a fatiguing, painful day. I am not prepared to go through many such days. If you want to be often on the wing, you must choose another consort."

"I am so, so sorry, papa—are you very tired? How unkind, how thoughtless of me!" cried Kate in eager self-reproach.

"No, no," remonstrated the Squire, "not at all unkind, but getting a little too much absorbed in one idea. But where's the wonder! The fact is ever before us. The world is turned upside down, and all our life is fallen out of joint!"

The next day Katherine resumed her seat in the red drawing room. She battled for patience; she tried to be good. She took advice, and made exception in favour of a few friends. She admitted Mrs. Jacques, and also Miss Buxton. But she was restless because nothing was being done. She lived as if waiting on events; outwardly submissive, inwardly all disquiet.

"Papa is satisfied with things as they are, but I

am not satisfied," she would complain with an immense sigh.

"Katherine must learn to consider others before herself. The Squire is jaded with distress. He is not equal to a wild-goose chase. Let John Fenwick turn up of himself. Who wants him?" Mrs. Jacques would rejoin.

"I do. We all do—for peace and comfort's sake. Let us know the best and the worst, that is what I ask; then, in time, we shall grow reconciled. Poor papa is duller than I am. Bently is not like itself. All the spirit and life are gone out of us."

"Not all, my dear. I met Mr. Rous in the lane, and he was as gay as a lark."

"Even Rous is out of humour sometimes, like the rest of us."

That was no marvel, considering how Katherine was using him. Rous was entitled to be forgiven if he was very often out of humour, was the positive retort. Mrs. Jacques was not a woman of sentiment; she had no esteem for shining acts of self-renunciation. "One person gets all the credit, and ever so many are involved in the suffering," said she. "You fancy you are behaving finely, and you are vexing half-a-dozen people. Marry Rous Eliot, before he

has time to change his mind. There are young men who would. That is my advice."

Katherine said nothing in answer to this, but she thought the more. She coloured, and her eyes flashed; and she was not at home to Mrs. Jacques when next she called at Bently.

It was early in February when the Bently scandal broke upon the world. It was April now—so many weeks and days had been tediously consumed in elucidating the unhappy story. In the meantime Rous Eliot had communicated with his father, and had received an injunction to cut short his leave and return to India. He had many a talk with Katherine on their private affairs between writing and receiving this peremptory summons, but she never would accept a renewal of his vows.

"Come, Kate, be generous, and forgive me," was his appeal.

But Kate would not forgive him in the way he meant. Miss Buxton, her staunch friend, asked her, "Why not?" Kate said she was not thinking of love. And that was true. Her imagination was busied with other things, but love lay in ambush all the while, and she was his captive more than she knew.

Rous might have accused her of caprice, but he was too kind and reasonable. She professed to have

a theory that their engagement had lapsed; yet when she was told what orders Colonel Eliot had laid upon him, she looked up in his face with a wonder so pathetic that he made haste to assure her that it was not at all his intention to go to India unless she sent him. To which she rejoined: "What right had she to keep him there?" He expended much eloquence in trying to convince her that it was his first and chief desire to give her the best of rights; but she would only answer that he did not understand—and then she sighed, and gazed away into the clouds with melancholy eyes, but a cheek still fair, soft, and round as a blush rose.

With all her sorrow, Kate had kept her health, and with health the beauty of youth defies the blight of sorrow. Madame Roussel had been sent for, and discipline had been maintained. The luxury of woe was denied to Kate, unless she could enjoy it at a canter on Bonnybelle, in company with Slyboots and her lover; or at a brisk trot with her judicious old governess, who was inexorable as to diurnal walks, long, conversational, roundabout, and in all sorts of weather. Sentimentality was a weed that had no chance of flourishing under these rigorous conditions, and though Kate did not put off her grave airs, she was natural in her serious-

ness, and not the wilful occasion of new distresses. Mr. Eliot wore the visage of age, grieving irremediably, but he had always a pleasant speech and caress for his dear little girl. Love her better he could not, but he showed his love more, that she might never despond or doubt for want of the assurance of it. And he let her plainly see that the shortest way to a restoration of his peace was her condescension to the lover's petition of his nephew.

The spring did not halt for Katherine's conclusions. April was swift-footed that year. Kate's dominant idea was to go in quest of her unknown father. She would not, perhaps could not, dispossess her mind of it. She certainly did not make the effort. The Squire and Rous recognized this obstacle in various discussions, but failed to remove it. The Squire had travelled much in his youth and middle age, but travel had lost all delight for him now. He wished that Rous could prevail on Katherine to marry him, and then they two could wander as far and wide in their romantic pursuit as they pleased. But Katherine was not thinking of love, still less of marriage; and Rous dared not vex her with too much entreaty.

"When she has found her father, or convinced herself that he is not to be found, my turn will

come again," said he, with constant resignation.
"For the nonce, I must be satisfied to hold second place to an idea."

"She betrays a lovely simplicity of confidence in you," said the Squire, and then praised her behaviour in every aspect—to his wife, to himself, to all their neighbours and dependants. Rous recalled him to the problem that wanted solving—how she was to be rewarded for her excellent virtues. Mr. Eliot groaned in heaviness, and said, he must even carry her to Italy himself—the season was getting on, but Venice was divine in May: and Venice, he trusted, would be the limit of their travels.

Country neighbours were deeply interested in the break-up at Bently, as one called it. "Break-up, nonsense! A couple of months at the outside will see the Squire at home again," was the exclamation of another, better informed as to Mr. Eliot's intentions. Dr. Masterman announced that he might leave his wife without anxiety: if her present calm endured, and his depression endured, she had a fair chance of outliving himself. And so it was decided that Katherine should have her way, and a pilgrimage to Italy should be undertaken.

Mrs. Eliot expressed herself satisfied with this

decision in Katherine's favour. Curiously little had been the difference in their intercourse since the cruel revelation that had reversed Kate's fortunes. If anything, they were easier with each other. Mrs. Eliot knew she had nothing to fear from Kate,—a creature who could not bear malice, in whom there was no rancour at all. Katherine continued to pay her the respect of habit, and still called her "Mamma," because her tongue could not frame itself to any other term; and this gentle forbearance had wrought its effect. Mrs. Eliot manifested an affection for her that was quite novel. She was gratified to see her enter her room. Yet they had some necessarily painful moments.

One afternoon Kate went in with her hands full of jewel-cases. "See here, mamma, these things are no longer mine," said she, displaying them on the toilette-table. "Here are the diamonds and emeralds that papa would not let me wear at my first ball, because they are too grand for a girl, and here are the lovely pearls that I did wear, and lots of trinkets besides. You know them all. But these I may keep, may I not? the pink coral necklace and brooch and bracelet you and papa gave me on my last birthday, and my pretty enamelled watch of the birthday before? Or have I no right to either?"

"The watch and the pink coral ornaments are yours, Kate," replied Mrs. Eliot. "No one can take them from you. The diamonds and pearls are heirlooms. They will go to Rous's wife—to you eventually."

"Oh, mamma, please don't talk of it! I have given Rous his liberty to choose again!" cried Kate, and ran out.

Another time, at good-night, Mrs. Eliot said to her: "You do not change, Kate. You were ever ready to kiss and be friends. When you were a child, I have seen you watch my lips many a time for a loving word, and I gave you none. Surely I was very cruel?"

"Oh, no, mamma, you were only a little cold. You indulged me; you gave me whatever I wished for. I loved you. I love you now."

"I hope your love will be made up to you some day, Kate! Where do you get your warm forgiving heart from?"

Kate often felt sore and profoundly troubled, but she was too tender to bruise this wounded spirit when she had the power in part to heal. "I suppose," she said, "that God gives it to me as the best heart to bear up under my share in our sorrow. For you know, mamma, it was a terrible sorrow when they told me I did not belong to Bently, or to you and poor papa. But everybody has been so good to me since, that I cannot persevere in being unhappy. Cousin Rous alone would keep my courage up."

"The comfort it would be to his uncle, and to me also, to see you two married, Kate!"

"It is enough for the present that he loves me," said Kate, and would say no more.

What Katherine had suffered, what a fall, what a humiliation, was a pretty theme for philosophic sentiment amongst her young contemporaries, but she spoke quite honestly when she avowed that she could not persevere in grieving. The trial that was the sharpest and most prolonged was the old Squire's. The poignancy of his pain was never dulled. Pride, affection, confidence, all were outraged, and the sweetness of his life was dashed with a bitterness that poisoned it at its source. He had not even the rough solace of resentment. There lay the wife of his bosom who had so wronged him, pitifully helpless, only confessing her guilt under terror and sentence of death. What could he do but pardon her, and devour his mortification in silence? His neighbours congratulated him on bearing his vexations like a man. They did not know how he felt them. Dr. Masterman, who did know, was the strongest advocate for the journey to Italy, ostensibly for

Katherine's sake, but really that he might get the Squire away from Bently, and relieved for a season from the incubus of his heavy trouble.

"He says that he forgives me, but I cannot feel myself forgiven while there is heartbreak in his face," his wife would mutter in frequent complaint.

There are a great many hours in the day. While Rous and Katherine helped and encouraged one another, the Squire moped. He visited the stables, but he never mounted his horse; he rambled through the fields and copses, but he gave no orders-without his nephew the men might have done what they liked on the place. He sat more in his wife's room, but she was dreary company. All his task was to soothe and reconcile her to what was unalterable. They could not, like other old people, husbands and wives for the third part of a century, revive in talk their happier times, and so cheat themselves of present grieving; for the slightest allusion that recalled those years was significant enough to strike them dumb with misery. Therefore Dr. Masterman most wisely judged when he counselled separation for a while, and the setting of a gulf between now and then.

"The Squire has aged ten years in as many weeks. His life tires him. If this change and exertion do not rouse him into interest again, we shall

Katherine's Trial.

not keep him long," was the dictum of the physician addressed to Rous.

Within a week afterwards the travellers were on their road.

The afternoon before their departure Joyce was helping Katherine in her room. Suddenly the tragedy of all these circumstances thrilled Kate's imagination. "Oh, Joyce, but this is pitiful indeed!" she cried, sitting down on the edge of the bed, and clasping her hands hard, while her eyes filled with tears.

"So it seems, Miss Kate, but what does it matter? It will be all the same a hundred years hence," rejoined the cynical old woman.

"I would rather not embrace your dreary phijosophy."

"I don't pretend to be better than I am, Miss Kate. There's the mistress now, she's at prayers and penance all day long. Instead of Mr. Burns, she has a priest comes over from Steepleton, a Catholic, who does not say much for her comfort that I can hear. She's awfully miserable and afraid after he's gone, and then the Squire's vext; but he mostly lets her be, to save her soul her own way. And that's all she thinks of—that's the turn her selfishness has taken."

Kate sighed from the depths of her heart. "And this journey is a penance for poor papa—I am sel-fish too."

"Nay, that you're not, Miss Kate, and never was! Bently's a melancholy house now, and that's a fact. The master may be fain to leave it for a bit. He has wronged nobody, and can look God and man in the face. He'll get a new lease o' life while he's away, see if he don't, Miss Kate—never you fret."

But Kate could not help but fret. That last day was very sad. When she went to Mrs. Eliot's room, all seemed so quiet before she opened the door that she expected to find her alone, and perhaps sleeping. But, no; she was lying with wide open, mournful eyes fixed on the Squire, who sat opposite in that drooping attitude so touchingly expressive of his weariness of his life. He had brought her a lovely crimson rose, the first of the season, but had let it fall on the floor at his own feet. Katherine stooped to pick it up, and her entrance recalled him to himself, but he did not make any effort to appear otherwise than he felt. She stood, somewhat abashed by her interruption of his reverie, the rose in her fingers, until Mrs. Eliot broke the painful silence.

"To-morrow by this time, Kate, you will be at Dover. You have done your packing? Is Joyce helping Madame?"

"Yes, mamma, but she will not be long."

The Squire asked if they had reduced their impedimenta into the smallest and lightest possible compass. Kate averred that they had, and really believed what she said.

Mrs. Eliot held out her restless fingers to receive the rose. The bed was littered with devotional books and pictures. A string of beads and an ivory crucifix lay with them—silent witnesses to the repentance she was painfully seeking.

The dinner-bell rang. Bous was heard marching along the gallery, descending the stairs. The light patter of Madame's slippers went after. "Go, Kate, I will follow you soon," said the Squire.

Katherine kissed her mamma. She was used to bid her this early good-night because, if disturbed later, Mrs. Eliot did not rest. The travellers were to start early in the morning, and this was their farewell—a kiss, a momentary clasp of two cold hands, and a few tremulous, inarticulate words that sounded like a prayer and a blessing, and thanks for pardon.

Rous Eliot had only Madame Roussel for company at dinner that evening.

But the next morning at Merrifield, when Miss Buxton came down to the road-side station to have a last glimpse of her departing friends, and of Katherine in particular, all the travellers wore faces of such reasonable cheerfulness that she assured them they looked like a party setting out on a journey for the mere pleasure of it. They were four. At the eleventh hour Mr. Eliot declared that he could not undertake this desultory pilgrimage without his nephew. Rous was only too glad to be wanted. Katherine's young acquaintances laughed and said, they envied her her beautiful tour—they meant that they envied her joy in her constant cousin's company.

It seemed natural to Kate that Rous should go—what reason could there be against it? Still she blushed, and looked slightly disconcerted by Miss Buxton's congratulations. However, she did not deny her obvious serenity. The Squire glanced kindly at her, and said, no doubt but they should get some pleasure out of their travels.

And the train rushed on.

### VIII.

# On the Road.

ALL the lamps of Dover were lighted when the travellers arrived, and walked from the station to the "Lord Warden Hotel." To supper and to bed were the orders for Madame and Katherine, and they were quickly sleeping in what, to Katherine's dreams, was like a big trunk of which the lid was being perpetually clapped down, and jumped upon to make it shut. That was the sea-wind gambolling on the roof and amongst the chimneys. And she awoke to what she fancied was the wash of waves. until she opened her eyes on the spectacle of Madame performing her morning gymnastics. Dear and excellent Madame, in brief red flannel jupe, and ample white cap, swinging her boots to and fro with the force and method of two pendulums, then clapping her hands behind and before with arms at full stretch, then bowing her back till her finger-tips touched her toes.

Katherine's impulsive merry laugh distracted the vigorous old lady from her exercises.

"You laugh, Katherine? Well, that is good, I

wish to hear you laugh. But see how I preserve my health, my agility, and the *souplesse* of my figure till seventy-two. There are few with six sons and daughters, and many more grand-children, who can walk so much or whose spirits are so tranquil."

"You always seem happy, Maddie, yet you have had troubles," said Katherine with a smile in her sympathy.

"I have had great troubles, but it pleased the good God that they should not break my heart. Devotion and regular exercise are very salutary for mind and body. If we are too proud and foolish to care for the body, its ill-humours infect the temper. Take care of the body, keep it fresh and free, and the temper is easy. When I hear a lofty voice making little of the infirmities of the flesh, as professing to have none, what I say to myself is: "Mind—that person is bad to live with." I have had experience."

From Dover to Calais was but an hour's blowing of a gentle breeze, and a sunny ripple of blue water. First came in sight the grey church-tower of centuries, and the lighthouse on the cliff; then the seabeaten walls, the gates, and the pier with its ever foreign faces, red nightcaps, and bare-legged, brawny fisher-wives. The Squire would take a walk into the town for old acquaintance' sake. Forty years

ago, before his beard was grown, when first he travelled, it was at Calais he landed.

"It has suffered less improvement than most places," said he, leading the way along the roughlypaved streets. "Look at it well, Kate: you will hardly see anything more un-English before you see home again."

Katherine was already opening observant eyes to its quaintnesses. She exclaimed at the prodigious burdens the women carried: at the queer ugly faces of the children and of the very aged poor who held out shrivelled hands for alms. In the Place d'Armes—surrounded by what tall houses, topt by what odd ingenious chimneys—the noonday glared and glowed, groups of soldiers loitered, and shopkeepers waited at their doors for buyers who were slow to come.

In the grim bastion-like church Madame knelt where other humble folk were kneeling, while the rest gazed about at the pictures, the sculptures, the votive offerings, symbols of the unfamiliar worship. Katherine felt shy in her curiosity, and would have liked to kneel down by Madame in the place that the prayers of so many generations had consecrated.

The afternoon's journey to Brussels carried them at express speed through a flat country, cultivated

like a garden, where even the wire fences of the railway embankments were made available for the training of espaliers. The apple-trees were in blossom, and the Squire made a note of the system as worthy of imitation. Rous Eliot and Katherine exchanged felicitous glances upon this; and when the two who had been travellers before the era of trains began to point out on the horizon ancient fortified cities and famous cathedral towers as places they had once known, they were encouraged to descant thereon, and the young hypocrites prefended to be sorry for themselves that they had missed those days of incident and adventure by being born fifty years too late.

Brussels was pretty in the twilight, but prettier still in the sunny morning, with its April greenness glittering after rain. By the rule of contraries, Katherine, being new herself, cared nothing for the gay new boulevards that are the modern world's pattern, but was charmed with St. Gudule shimmering in the sun, and with the picturesque houses and palaces of the days of the Spanish Dominion. She was charmed too with the scenery of Ardennes (the next stage of their journey), with the cherry orchards, the hills and dales, the fir-woods and innumerable streams babbling over their stony beds—but she thought the scenery round home was quite as

beautiful, and appealed to Rous to support her opinion. Rous shook his head — frankly, he could not.

Cologne was their resting-place for that night—a very sultry night with thunder-showers, but followed by a splendid next day. Rous and Katherine betook themselves to the cathedral before breakfast, How glad they were to escape for an hour into that busy solitude, and feel alone together!

"It was like the world in little-life beginning. crowned and ended," Kate told Madame afterwards. "A children's service was going on, and there were hundreds of boys and girls in the nave, with slates and books ready for school. When they filed out a coffin stood before the steps of the choir, a crucifix at the head, and tall candles at the feet. sacristan lighted the candles, and a dead mass was chanted—oh, such lovely, sad music. A bride and bridegroom passed us; she was quite young, and looked nice through her veil. But the figures that I shall not forget were a poor hunchback, who knelt against a pillar with his face hidden; and a pale young lady, attended by a servant, who was going out of church with a sneer on her lips—we wondered what thoughts she could have in her heart."

"And the church itself, Kate, apparently you did not wonder at that?" Madame drily suggested.

"Oh, Maddie!" was Kate's soft remonstrance.
"You have seen it, and what can I say?"

"You could say a great deal if you had studied it carefully. Did you admire the stained glass by Albert Durer?"

"The sun was shining on the windows of the apse. One or two of those are his, are they not?"

Madame looked grave, exactly as she used to look when Kate came up with an imperfect lesson not so very long ago. Kate would have had to take back her imperfect lesson then, and learn it better; now, being quit of that rule, and fond of Madame with the sort of fondness which moves an affectionate girl to take a sweet gentle old face between her plump hands, and kiss it, she soon kissed away her inappropriate seriousness and airs of rebuke.

Through Rhineland the travellers were borne that long day: through a flush of blossom and beauty, of pink and white orchards, green meadows and golden colza fields. The vineyards were bare sticks yet, and the polled acacias only budding into soft yellow leafiness; the river was low in its bed and the deep-laden boats toiled slowly; but when the mid-day fervent heat declined came an after-glow on the red rocks, a purple warmth on the hills, and a hazy remoteness on the plains that made all

lovely. Mr. Eliot was very tired before the evening which brought them to Wiesbaden, but as the next day was Sunday, they had a good rest to refit them for the road.

Madame and the Squire had visited this town in its gaudy season. Now it was desolate; its gardens were empty, its magnificent halls for play silent. The young ones thought it pleasant and gay at its dullest: it is laid out for pleasure.

"I should not like to expose you to its temptations long," said the Squire.

"Ah, but it has tragedies too!" added Madame with a look of dismal recollection.

The morrow's journey took them to Würtzburg; and the morrow after that to Munich; and the morrow after that again to Innspruck. It was quite summer in the valleys of the Isar and the Inn; most exquisite weather, and all along the road variety: villages and towns; dusk pine-forests, lightened with silver birch and tasselled larch; broad fields a-blush with campion; and in the distance snow peaks—sharp and clear, soft and clouded, tinged with dun, with violet, with grey over red, and wrapt in thunder-fleeces, all in one little hour.

A day of ten thousand was that which carried them up the valley of the Sill and over the Brenner Pass, then down by the swift Eisack to Botzen.

Winding between the mountains, rushing white over the stones, fed by torrents innumerable, foamed the beautiful river. Here the rocky buttresses drew close, and only left space for the flood to pass through: there they retired, and made wide room for picturesque villages, each marked by its red-tiled church-spire. The meadows were enamelled with flowers: forget-me-not, lucerne, cistus, tormentilla; whole fields were yellow with pretty primula-St. Joseph's flower, Madame called it-crimson heather clothed the stony places, and the water-courses were all fringed with marsh-mallow, rich as gold. At intervals came in view the old post-road that the Squire had travelled in his nonage; he was a little contemptuous of the new modes, and Rous agreed with him that this romantic Tyrol was a country for men to see with a knapsack and a walkingstick.

Botzen lies couched at the confluence of two rivers. Around it rise lofty green hills, with white dolomite peaks looking over. It was a very hot afternoon, and only Rous and Katherine were inclined to wander. Bells—church-bells were ringing somewhere, and they followed the sweet sound of them until they came to the chapel of the Franciscan convent. Whether to rest under the fragrant shadow of a splendid paulownia standing there in

all the glory of blossom-time or to go to prayers? Katherine would go to prayers. It was a dim little place, and twenty nuns were the congregation, with a few very poor and old people. But the singing was like voices of angels. Half-an-hour lapsed in a peaceful dream. Katherine woke up from it quite loth to go.

After dinner, in the cool of the evening, they all went out again, and sat on the old wooden bridge. A few townsfolk came loitering by. A cart passed, drawn by two cream-coloured oxen; it was loaded with fresh grass, the flower-colours vivid amongst it, and perched on the top was a girl, her face rosy-brown and warm under a straw-hat, in which she had stuck two scarlet poppies, and some broad reeds that hung down behind like ribbons.

"Oh, if I were an artist!" exclaimed Rous Eliot. It was, indeed, a very pretty picture. All the scene was pretty. Beyond the bridge, where the dusty road ran off into the country, was a garden of chestnut-trees. The deep river wound through pebbly shallows, encumbered with vast boulders that made pools and eddies in the tributary streams, and graced with little plumy islands, stranded there till the next winter's floods should sweep them away. The town had a natural picturesqueness from its position, and the inhabitants had not yet acquired a

taste for fine houses to spoil it. Madame invited Katherine to bring out her sketch-book, and, under protest, Katherine did. She produced a capital likeness of the parish-church steeple, which, from the distance, had the air of being roofed with particoloured straw-plait; on closer inspection its covering turned out to be of highly glazed tiles, black, brown, green, yellow and white, arranged in neat zigzags; but she modestly declined to attempt any rendering of the sunny side of the mountains, or of the amber sky above them.

The beautiful bells of Botzen awoke the travellers betimes in the morning, and they took the road again, saying one to another: "To-night we shall sleep in Italy."

The Adige kept them company now, rolling its turbid waves noisily towards the south. Already the landscape was of warmer tone; the vines hung bowery on their trellises, the mulberry-trees were full of leaf, the alianthus was white with masses of downy flower. To be young, to be loved, to be here, was paradise to Katherine. She had not forgotten the end of this pilgrimage, no one had forgotten it, but by general tacit consent there was a truce to talk of it. And Mr. Eliot, unless his countenance flattered him, was reaping the best effects of change in a mind diverted. In such satisfactory

case they arrived at Verona, where they were to rest for the Sunday at the inn of the "Two Towers."

As they approached the town Katherine's heart began to beat a little faster. It was at Verona that were painted those two sketches she had seen in the house of certain old friends of John Fenwick at Eversley. She kept a shy, bright look-out for the scene of them. There were the cypresses, avenues and groves of cypresses, tall and black against the sky, with fresh blue-green shoots in their blackness—too many cypresses to be the distinction of a sketch. And how long ago were those pictures painted? More than twelve years ago—and trees fall and are cut down many times in twelve years!

Dear Katherine! With very little knowledge and a great deal of imagination to go upon, she had woven a complete web of fancies about the shadow of her father and his artist-work. Her mind was made up in the faith of Miss Rolandi that he had a great genius. And she added daily fine heroic touches to his portrait, of which she said no word yet to anybody—not even to her Cousin Rous. Indeed, towards her Cousin Rous she was endeavouring to cultivate an ineffectual pretty reserve, with her habit of frankness sadly against her. And his assurance also. Rous indulged her innocent caprices of propriety because they amused him, and at any

moment he could sweep them away. This pilgrimage was giving him beautiful opportunities of proving what a capital consort he would be on a much longer pilgrimage, and Katherine was far from insensible to the unobtrusive, kind assiduities with which he constantly surrounded her.—It was not without good grounds for her insinuation that Miss Buxton had congratulated them when they set forth: not without cause that her young acquaintances had laughed and envied her.

## IX.

### At the "Due Torre."

SUMMER and very hot summer it was at Verona, though May was but just begun.

"I shall repose myself," Madame announced to Katherine as they were conducted up a stone stair to a balcony that surrounded and overhung the courtyard.

It was a bowery balcony, with green foliage trellised overhead and flourishing shrubs in pots. A door was opened into a spacious room, and they paused on the threshold to see their way. Windows and shutters were closed to exclude the sun, and preserve a cool retreat of delicious quiet. Katherine helped her dear old comrade to disrobe, and lie down within the white net mosquito-curtains of her bed. She was not tired herself, and presently the fragrance of a certain cigar upon the balcony emboldened her to look out, and discover Rous on the watch for her. The Squire was imitating Madame's example. "Was she disposed for a short excursion before dinner?" he inquired. She was so disposed, and they descended to the courtyard,

where the lumbering yellow diligence had just arrived from Mantua.

"We will not go anywhere, we will just stroll on the shady side of the streets a little way," suggested Katherine.

"If there be a shady side," said Rous as they emerged into the full blaze of the piazza where Dante stands colossal, looking towards the palace of the Can Grande della Scala, that famous lord of Verona who sheltered him for awhile in his bitter exile.

Three hundred feet into the quivering blue air rose the brick bell-tower of the nobles, simple, magnificent, and at the further end of the piazza the clock-tower, furnishing a name to their inn. Here were the tombs of the Scaligers. Here was the ancient forum, surrounded by picturesque buildings, grey and worn with ages of history. In dusky corners, in recesses of doors, lay sleeping figures, men and boys resting from their toil in the heat of the day; from a marble fountain at the mouth of a narrow street a woman was drawing up water in a brazen pot to the top-story of a decayed house; now and then a lady passed with lofty piled hair, black veil, bare throat and fan expanded.

"If we wander too far and lose ourselves we can always take a carriage back to the inn," was

the cautious reflection of the two young people as they began to feel bewildered, and more and more attracted by the romantic strangeness of this, their first Italian city.

They came into the flower-market. They loitered under the arcades by the stalls where the country-folk sat to sell and gossip. The big crimson peonies, the cherries, the green crisp salad herbs were a garden. Here were baskets full of bright yellow cassie for perfume, roses of every shade for beauty, and dainty button-hole flowers from the orange and jasmine trees. Rous bought a handful of cassie, and shared it with Katherine. The sweet scent of it haunts for years any casket where it is treasured.

By-and-by they reached the river, and stood upon a turreted bridge which a mediæval castle guards, and looked up and down the shallow, broiling torrent to the floating water-mills moored across the stream, to the heights crowned with serrated walls and fortifications, and to the lines of solemn cypresses. Either way the view was lovely, but Katherine could not trace John Fenwick's pictures there. The drowsy warmth, the rushing sound made them silent. They went on and on; in the sun, in the shade, till they confronted a broad open space almost tropical in its white glow of heat. Rous Eliot said it was like India. Beyond it stood the church of St. Zanoni,

the patron saint of Verona, and they took courage and gained the refuge of its porch under the Lombard gable. A tiny decrepit being sate at the gate, and asked alms for charity. The bronze doors swung easily to let them in, and most grateful was the shelter of the high roof—the quaintest roof of painted wood, sustained by ribs springing from the piers of the arches. Katherine remembered that this was a famous church of antiquity, and said, Ought they not to look at "Murray" for information? But Rous had left "Murray" behind-he was always leaving "Murray" behind, Madame complained, and she must really take charge of the guide-books herself. So they looked at the church instead; at the saint, black but comely, in the act of blessing, at the frescoes of the choir, and queer images that people the aisles. One of the lateral chapels, the chapel of the Virgin, May being her dedicated month, was undergoing the process of dusting and decoration by a priest; he handled his feather brush and disposed his paper flowers with absorbed diligence, while two of his holy brethren sate on rush chairs, and read alternately from a huge brown book. No eye of curiosity was permitted to rove after the strangers. And now appeared a sacristan to earn a fee. Willingly would Rous and Katherine have avoided his instruction,

but he knew his prey, and drove them into the crypt, enumerated its pillars, its tombs of martyrs; then into the cloisters where Katherine was sorry for a tethered lamb that bleated piteously after a frolicsome companion left at liberty; and round by the vast vase of red porphyry that once stood outside the church, with a sacrificial slab for Christian martyrs that stands there still. The sacristan had a story to tell of the desecration of the cloisters by the Austrian cavalry, who profanely littered their horses amidst the graves, chipped the sculptures and cut down for fire-wood a venerable cedar, the glory of the place. He had many another old story besides, but Rous Eliot said in decisive English, "That is enough," and declined to listen to the legends in bronze upon the doors.

The poor little beggar still crooned her petition, and held out a tremulous claw. Not another soul was in sight. All living creatures besides had crept away from the blinding, blazing sun. Rous enriched her with a second coin. Katherine gave her yet another. It was riches! her inarticulate mumble was, perhaps, blessings in exchange.

In counting on a carriage anywhere the young people had not duly considered the customs of an afternoon of the Veronese. They only of all the polite world were out of doors. They had to wander home to their inn on foot; rewarded only by a view of the palace of the Capulets—a palace fallen from its high estate and become in part a hostelry, and in part a burrow for the most indigent poor. But a marble tablet over the gateway still records that there once lived Juliet — Romeo's Juliet — "the sweetest lady in Verona."

Madame was still resting within her mosquitocurtains when Katherine returned to the gloom and hush of the lofty old chamber on the balcony. Kate dropt into a chair in the midst of it, let her hat and gloves fall upon the floor, and without a thought was in dreamland. What she saw there, what she said, or heard, or did was all sunny confusion, roses, bees, foam, sweet odours, hum and dazzle. Two hours drifted away.

"Dear child, she is tired, she is asleep still. Hush-sh-sh!" murmured Madame, and awoke her.

"No, no," protested Kate; "we have only this instant come in, Cousin Rous and L"

The door was open, it seemed, for she heard Rous laugh, and then the Squire say: "This instant we have come out from dinner—you have lost your dinner, little sleepy-head."

Kate rose softly—surprised, ashamed, and looked round her. The shutters, the windows were open;

there was Madame, peering in at the door ajar, and Rous and Mr. Eliot in the green shadow behind her. It was true. She had slept in the day-time. It was evening now, and cool; there were noises in the streets and the piazza. They rallied her on the facility with which she adopted lazy Italian habits; but when she presently came out refreshed and in the sweetest humour, cool, fair and lovely in white robes and red ribbons, they appreciated the use of the siesta. And she was allowed to dine upon the balcony.

The gentlemen went to the Arena afterwards. Kate would have gone too, but she was not encouraged. After the manner of country gentlemen everywhere, they talked of Bently amidst Roman ruins—talked of Acrobat, a young colt as promising as anything the Merrifield stables had to boast of. Mr. Eliot interrupted this discourse, at last, to remark tritely on the indestructibility of Roman brickwork. Rous gazed about at the vastness of the place, perambulated the outer galleries, explored the horrid dens. The grass-grown arena where Christians had been thrown to the lions, where slaves of war had fought to the death to make an hour's sport for their cruel masters, was occupied now by a structure of wood and canvas, such as itinerant circus-men set up on village greens. The way in and out was

through a dark arcade converted into a booth for the sale of curiosities—not curiosities specially local, but cracked bits of oriental china, and decrepit specimens of japan ware, that had perhaps adorned the boudoir of a Veronese lady contemporary with the famous tragedy of the Capulets and Montagues. Rous climbed to the topmost tier of seats, and climbed down again, with a tuft of wall-rue in his hand and a long tendril of toad-flax, its minute, pretty purple flowers thick upon it, which he proposed to carry to Katherine.

Meanwhile Katherine and Madame sat outside their door, the twilight faded, and the vines on the trellises became grey like the sky. There was a waning moon, and as the night closed, the stars appeared, and the balmy air was filled with fragrance. By-and-by the lamps were lighted over the courtyard, the colours of the leaves came out again, and as Rous returned along the balcony, he had a vision of Katherine, beautiful as an angel, her oval cheeks delicately flushed, her eyes humid, looking up in his face a loving welcome. He twined his weeds with the red ribbon in her hair, and heard her sigh as he leant against the wall, gazing down upon her with a most tender admiration. In her lap was a little casket that he had brought her from India; she was holding it with her two hands as with caressing thoughts.

Mr. Eliot began to inform Madame on the subject of the Arena. Their conversation was distinctly audible, and for the general benefit, interspersed with references to "Murray." They desired to be accurate, to know the dates of the building, its dimensions, figures and purposes with precision—at least, Madame did. The young people could not listen much. They had their own way of being happy, and found love's dream as beguiling at Verona as at Bently. Now was the idle, half-light time when Katherine forgot all her noble resolutions, and melted at Rous's voice.

"Why are you melancholy? What do you sigh for, dear Kate?" whispers he.

"I don't know," says Kate with another long breath. "I have been thinking—It is here I keep my precious treasures; I have put my cassie-flowers amongst them," opening the box. "What have you done with yours?"

Rous was not ready with an appropriate answer. His cassie-flowers were still in the market-woman's paper-cornet, in his unsentimental pocket. He begged to know what were Katherine's other treasures. She lifted a letter, stained with salt-water: "This is your one Indian letter to me: I have no other—it was in a wreck, they said; see how it is discoloured! No, I did not cry over it—cry, indeed! These are your

letters from Paris last February—I know they were not written to me, but I kept them—rescued them from the waste-paper basket, perhaps." She displayed a string of beads, nothing but little common shells on a crimson thread. "You gave me this at Filey—that time we spent a summer holiday by the sea with Maddie. Do you remember?"

"And you are making relics of them? I remember—we fell out often, Maddie and I, concerning boats, and wading and getting wet. Once she threatened to send me home for letting you walk into a pool—as if Kate's little wilful feet did not always walk and run just where Kate pleased!"

Kate laughed, a light laugh of amused recollection. "Oh, Rous, but we were happy on the sands, getting into scrapes together! You were very good to me then, though I was so much smaller."

"And am I not good to you now? Are you not happy to-day?"

Kate said: "Yes, yes—but to-morrow," slowly swinging the beads on her finger.

"Let to-morrow take care for itself! Throw away that trash, Kate, and you shall have a prettier keepsake."

Instead Kate restored it to its place in the casket. "There is room for it—let it stay? I can't bear to be ungrateful! We thought it so pretty when it

was new. You gave it me one day when you had hurt me by accident—it quite healed the smart, that, and the kisses you gave me with it. Oh, how I cried while I fancied you had pushed me over on purpose!"

"I daresay I pushed you over on purpose, and then repented, and vowed I did not mean you any harm. That is what we all do, boy and man—and are you any better, Kate? See how you plague me, and protest that it is in my true interest," says Rous plaintively.

Kate had the wit to evade a reply. She knew what he meant, and she never forgot what Mrs. Jacques had advised. It was her utter resolve to allow him ample time to change his mind-she would be married for love's sake only; there should be no pity in it, no making the best of a grievous dilemma. Kate was not more logical than the generality of her sex. In her rich estate she had never dreamed of accusing her cousin of an after-thought to her fortune; it did not strike her as an injustice to imply that the loss of her fortune was a reason why he might wish to leave her. She had evidence to the contrary, and she let him persevere in his wooing almost as boldly as before. Now and then she interposed a barrier, but it was very slight-more a proyocative than a hindrance. She had given him no

kiss since that fatal day of the revelation, when she had asked him beforehand whether the coming trouble would divide them, and he had told her never. She recalled that bitter sweet moment with a sudden pang, and Rous became sensible that there were tears in the eyes that refused to look up. He loved his love in her blitheness; he thought they had grieved enough, considering the short time that is given to man to be glad and rejoice in his youth, so he tried to rally her into a gayer humour.

"Kate used to be the merriest soul alive, the sunniest little lady! What has come over her that she should be like Niobe—all tears?" The friendly gloom permitted Rous to lay a fond hand on his sweetheart's bright head as he besought her to shine on him again, to break through her clouds, and crown him with a new joyful day. It was so droll to hear Rous talk poetry, even in jest, that Kate did shine and laugh. Then he made her confess the causes of her melancholy. She mentioned fears, forebodings, vague pains and doubts. He entreated her to be less of a riddle; moral mysteries perplexed him. She asked if he did not sometimes feel as if everything in the world was uncertain and shaken? He begged to assure her that he did not; he felt as firm on his feet as ever. If she was experiencing any unsteady sensations, let her cling to his stout arm

for support—by all that was dear and holy, he would never let her go again, never leave her nor forsake her. Kate pretended to be deaf of that ear. Urged to further confidences, she enlarged paradoxically, enigmatically, on her anxieties about what might befall her in Italy, on what might be the consequences of meeting with her father, on the dreadful possibility of being separated from all who knew and loved her.

Rous brushed away these vagaries as so many mental cobwebs. "I will tell you what I anticipate," said he gaily. "When this John Fenwick turns up, he will be more embarrassed than delighted to hear that he is richer by a daughter than he knew. I daresay he is a very good fellow, most artists are—moreover, have we not heard his good report? We shall have a solemn interview and explanation. Everybody will feel awkward. Somebody will cry. The Squire will talk beautifully. I shall talk sense, and announce that you belong to me if there is faith in woman! We shall come to a perfect understanding, and shall be capital friends ever after."

"What is that you two are plotting?" asked Mr. Eliot. Madame and he had exhausted the Arena.

Young people are blessed with a peculiar facility of passing from one vein of humour to another.

Kate kept her tears for secret service more than at first, and laughed when she could. She laughed now, and then was serious again, while Rous gave an elaborate, not quite accurate account of his previsions concerning her father. Somehow his fun fell flat. Collateral circumstances were involved too tragical to jest at. Mr. Eliot bade him hold his peace, and stretched out a trembling hand to Katherine in the dark: "Let us say good-night, my pet; we have had a long day, and are all tired," said he. Kate kissed him, and went at once. "Good-night, Kate," cried Rous as she was vanishing. "Good-night, dear-I had forgotten you," says she, and turns for a quick instant to give him her hand, with the flash of a lamp on her face. She was quite pale and moved. Rous said to himself that this would be a bad night with her-one of the dreary nights such as she had when the shock of her trouble was thrilling in every nerve-and his good heart yearned over her with a tenderness of affection that she had not yet learnt to prize at half what it was worth.

In their chamber afterwards Madame said to Katherine: "Events never happen as we plan them. You young people plan all for joy, and you have control of nothing! My dear child, let us pray the good God to smoothen your difficult path, and give

you a submissive heart. You are setting yourself, in pride, against what is most of all desirable. Take care you don't lose it."

Katherine was standing in front of a little silver-framed mirror, the light of two wax tapers on her face. "How white I look!" she said. The words sounded irrelevant, but they were an echo of Madame's counsel. A submissive heart, a whitened cheek. "I perceive," she added after a moment's silence, "that our calamity will not lie still in its grave, though we pray over it every day with tears. I pity poor mamma, I forgive her with all the compassion that I have, and so does papa. Yet, see how a little word brings back his grief and humiliation! I wish God would give us easier forget-fulness!"

"Dear child, that is like your impatience!" said Madame. "We should be none the better, none the happier if He did. Our sorrows, sanctified, become our holiest treasures. A life without sorrow would be arid as a garden without rain or dew."

"I can bear my own trouble, but I am so, so hurt for poor papa."

"Well, then, you must give up your way for his, and marry my lord. That is the only consolation for him—has he not told you so many times?"

Madame concluded in a practical tone, and betook herself to her private devotions.

Rous was correct in his pitiful thoughts of Katherine. It was very long before she slept or tried to sleep. She put out the lights and sat in the window. There was a church opposite that bulked large against the sky. Its bell was ringing for early service, and the yellow dawn had dimmed the stars before she laid her head on its pillow. Madame slumbered heavily after the fatigues of the day; she was not aware of Kate's keeping that vigil, or she would summarily have abridged it.

"It was Rous that planned all for joy; our trouble hardly touches him at all," Kate thought. "Dear Rous, I love him so! How kind he can be when one is feeling unhappy!"

That was her last conscious reflection before she dropt into a morning sleep. Perhaps it had its influence on her waking serenely. She was not given to distrusting—whether to distrusting God or her friends; and her sweet face showed no traces of grieving when they met again under the green shade of the balcony at an Italian breakfast.

The day was going to be as hot as yesterday. Madame announced that she should attend mass at the church opposite. The Squire and his nephew

had received letters which they desired to talk over apart; and they had arranged for themselves a tour of the walls, gates, forts, barracks and strong places of the city-much too fatiguing a tour for Katherine. Rous said it would do her no harm to go to church with Madame; she could think of good things, if she could not join in the service. So Kate went, and sat over against a wonderful sculpture of a black slave in ragged raiment, supporting on his bowed back the vase of holy water, and thought of good things and profane things (of the empty, redcurtained pew at Bently, of the singing children in the old rood-last, of her mamma in the solitary house alone), looking very pretty and devotional with her English prayer-book, and rested her mind, and meditated and dreamed, and came away quite like Sunday.

The chamber on the balcony was already darkened against the afternoon sun; but with iced coffee and cakes, works of piety and siesta, they managed to pass the time till dinner very agreeably; and the gentlemen, returning half-an-hour before, were met with the brisk welcome commonly accorded to friends who have been missed.

In their absence several parties of travellers had arrived, and the table-d'hôte was full. There were other cigars upon the balcony besides Rous Eliot's,

and he would not have his pretty Kate stay there. Madame retired to her apartment, and Kate must have followed had not the Squire proposed a walk to the Castle-Bridge and the terrace beyond the river, to see the sun set. They climbed the steps just as the sun was sinking below the horizon; the magnificent plain of Venetia was spread out like a map before them; the distant Apennines were flushed with golden glory; the towns and villages that stud the rich valleys of the Adige and the Po were bathed in purple twilight, and where the swift rivers roll away towards Venice and the sea, the evening shadows were stealing over, and folding all in mysterious cloud. Here, at last, Katherine flattered herself that she could see John Fenwick's sunset picture. But she was wrong. It was painted from a garden where she did not go. However, the idea pleased her, and there was nobody to contra dict it: which was a blessing. People would be much happier often if they were benignly suffered to remain in their innocent mistakes and pleasant delusions.

Mr. Eliot was silent and abstracted during their walk, and left all the conversation to the young people. Rous had an equable, courageous gaiety of temper that never quite abandoned him. "You are like a bright fire in dark, wet weather," Kathe-

rine once said to him. "Come warm you at me then," was Rous's cordial invitation. This evening he was more like shadow from a scorching sun.

"Something is wrong, dear, I know," whispered Kate. "Something wrong in those letters. Papa only looks like that when he is at the lowest ebb of his spirits. I know all his looks now. Love and pity have opened my eyes. Tell me, if you may."

Rous turned and spoke to his uncle, perhaps to cheer him, perhaps to gain a moment on this shrewd questioner. Mr. Eliot answered briefly, and a minute after they found that he had dropped behind.

"We can do nothing but be careful of him—he does look depressed," said Rous. "Vexations must arise. One error is always liable to breed more. But you have woes enough of your own, dear little Kate—it would not heal the Squire's wounds to have you sharing them. Blind sympathy is all men want from women in one half of their difficulties—like a soft hand smoothing their sick pillows. They prefer that women should stand out of sight while the skilful surgeon does his sharp cutting and cauterizing. Ah! Kate, it is too bad, entangling me in metaphors!"

"You are afraid of plain speech," rejoined Kate. "You have a secret to hide—your guilty

air betrays it! But I do not want to know anything that does not concern me"—this with great magnanimity.

"I am relieved to hear it—then we can converse on other topics. This terrace is very fine; these roses are beautiful."

"It does concern me, dear Rous, I know it does. Nevertheless the roses are as beautiful as roses can be."

"And the cypresses are quite a feature in the landscape at Verona."

Katherine understood that she was not to be informed of the new, present cause of the Squire's vexation, and she acquiesced like a most patient little lady. Rous declared himself quite touched by the spectacle of her resignation. Touched he might be, but he was not made more communicative. Kate thought, however, that it could not be any very grave matter, or he would not have turned her curiosity into a jest. Another incident following close upon it, put it for the moment out of her mind.

Going in again from their walk she found Madame with lamp lighted and spectacles on nose, turning over the leaves of the Travellers' Book. She shut it up hastily, cried out that she was tired of it, and glad to see her young comrade back.

"We will read a chapter, and go to bed," she proposed.

"Oh, Maddie, it is far too early! I could never sleep," said Kate, and drew the volume towards her.

"Leave it till the morning," urged Madame.

"In the morning we shall have no time. We start before seven."

Kate was thinking of nothing. Madame's private researches suggested nothing to her. They had, however, a motive, and here, for the first time, they were successful. She had found the name of John Fenwick under a date of only three months before. "Let me show you something then, and you will need to seek no further," said she.

. "Show me what?" Kate knew though she asked; it suddenly dawned upon her.

Madame did not answer, but tranquilly resumed the book, and pointed out the page. Katherine quivered from head to foot. The signature was in a firm delicate character, the name written in full, the date the thirty-first of January in the current year. "Going on to Padua," was added. Kate gazed till the letters danced up and down, then effaced themselves altogether. The quest had not been very long—even now they were on the track! Padua? That was but a little journey away, and

they might meet at Padua! She had entreated to know the best and the worst—she would know them very soon! In the shock of certainty she could not say whether she was glad or sorry to be in sight of the end. All the colour and brightness fled from her face. Madame pitied her.

"Dear child, this is too much emotion. Why do you tremble? What do you fear?" she remonstrated gently.

"Shall we tell papa to-night?" said Kate in an unsteady voice.

"No. It might trouble his rest. Let him sleep, poor man; when he sleeps he does well all day. But we will send it to my lord the first thing in the morning."

Katherine smiled with a wan countenance. "We might safely send it to him now. He will sleep none the worse for our discovery, and he might inquire of the people here."

"That is a wise thought; let him have it at once." Madame peeped out into the balcony. It was deserted. Only a solitary waiter haunted it. The gentlemen of Madame's party, he said, were writing letters in their rooms. Madame bade him carry the book to the younger of the two, open at the page where John Fenwick's name was set.

Katherine was justified in her assurance of her

lover's equanimity. He glanced at the signature, laid his forefinger on it, pondered an instant, and said to the man: "Do you recollect this person?"

The waiter considered, then shook his head. He did not recollect that person—perhaps Giuseppe might; Giuseppe had a wonderful memory for strangers who stopt at the inn. He himself was too busy to observe them.

"It will do in the morning," said Rous Eliot, and shut up the book for the man to carry away, dismissing him with a nod. And then he resumed the writing of his interrupted letter.

This letter was to Colonel Eliot, to meet him at Aden, to intercept him on his way to England. Amongst the letters that had overtaken the Squire and his nephew at Verona, were letters from the Colonel, forwarded from Bently, announcing his immediate return home. It was plainly intimated that the object of his return was to prevent his son taking any rash step in marriage. This was why Mr. Eliot looked so dejected and dull; and this was the secret Rous could by no means afford to reveal to Katherine. He was now letting his father know that in marriage, as in other things, he meant to be his own master.

#### X.

#### A Garden of Padua.

The travellers did not start early in the morning as had been proposed. They delayed their journey till five of the afternoon, and changed their destination from Venice to Padua. For Giuseppe had information that concerned them nearly. He recollected Mr. Fenwick well, and described him as a little gentleman with a fair beard and much burnt by the sun; very easy, gay and good-humoured, and a famous whistler. He had retained an apartment at the "Two Towers" a whole month, painting and running about. The date in the book was the date on which he left for good. He had friends in the place, and friends also living at Padua. One of the latter, an Englishman, had come over to Verona for two days while he was working there.

"'A little gentleman, very easy, gay and goodhumoured'—I told you so, Kate! Could there be a better prospect?" was Rous Eliot's rallying speech to Katherine when he had epitomized for her benefit the result of his inquiries.

Katherine looked pleased, and Madame added

with kind, warning rebuke: "You will not agitate yourself again about nothing, I hope. See how weary you are for want of rest! Yes, I heard you turning and tossing and fretting all night. I spoke two or three times, but you paid me no heed. I slept not at all either for thinking of you."

Rous looked regretfully at his sweetheart, and reproachfully too-this was a second night of disquiets, with long exhausting days besides. smiled and sighed in his face, and pleaded that she could not help it. Mr. Eliot watched them, and said nothing. He had a new pre-occupation of his mind, and was infinitely more troubled and perplexed by his brother's reiterated veto on the marriage of Rous and Katherine than by the inscription in the Travellers' Book at the "Two Towers." That, in fact, though the sight of it had so moved Kate, brought her very little nearer to her father than the information already collected in London. But Colonel Eliot's letter set her much further away from her Cousin Rous. Rous and his uncle had discussed it very warmly while walking about Verona the day before.

"Don't act in hasty defiance of your father," was the Squire's advice to his nephew.

"It does not seem as if Katherine would give me the chance. They are of one accord in thisthat I ought to have a period of probation, and leisure to tire," said Rous.

"Don't let Kate know that—I would rather have seen you married out of hand, but if it is not to be, you are both young, and can afford to wait a while. Family quarrels are hateful. We must make allowance for prejudice. You will always have me for your advocate. I do not forget that, in the first instance, I discouraged your affection—disallowed your engagement. My brother recalls this to my mind, and how he agreed with me."

"Katherine had my word, I had hers, when she was heiress of Bently, and I was nothing. To take back my word now that our positions are reversed, would be utterly dishonourable. How can my father imagine it? And she is the dearest thing in the world to me—a thousand times dearer since she is so helpless and dependent," cried Rous with impetuosity.

"Have only as much patience and love as she has, and all must come right in the end. My brother is not ungenerous."

Rous did not account of patience as a manly virtue, and chafed at this counsel. Perhaps his letter to his father would have been more conciliatory and judicious had he been endowed with that Christian grace. There are harsh thoughts to

which it is wise not to give words. Mr. Eliot refrained from irritating the young man, but he was deeply, though secretly, irritated himself. The consciousness of this made him careful of his utterances. He was not so prudent in his acts.

From the first discovery of his wife's treason he had been fully purposed to make a daughter of Katherine, while reserving to his nephew all the privileges and prerogatives of his ultimate successor and heir. But when he read Colonel Eliot's renewed injunctions to his son—injunctions weighted with contemptuous threats and insinuations—he said to himself, in his anger, that if this marriage did not take place in his lifetime, his brother or his nephew should inherit only the bare bones of Bently. Katherine should have the substance, and suffer as little in her fortunes as might be. And one of the letters he had written last night was to bid Mr. Morgan send him out the draft of another will for this new disposal of his property.

All the way to Padua he was reflecting on what he had done with compunctious visitings. Rous asked no better than to marry Katherine, his whole heart was set on her—was he to be punished if his father forbade the banns, and Katherine proudly or perversely stood aloof? This would be most unjust. A coldness might be bred of it, resentment, aliena-

tion-better trust her to Rous's love, and his father's integrity. The poor Squire was not what he had been in moral courage, in firmness and clearness of judgment. He did and undid, doubted, regretted, gave way to forebodings, and dreary anxieties for Katherine. So indulged as she had been, so flattered, petted and caressed, she would suffer terribly from any change, hardship, denial-dear, tender child that he had loved so! What he suffered in the anticipation is indescribable. He gazed on her innocent unconsciousness until he could have wept for her. What did she know of the rough side of the world? She had never had a wish ungratified. The warm comforts and luxuries, the safe, soft well-being of a rich home where she had been the central treasure and delight, had been hers; friends and neighbours had smiled on her the best welcome they had; servants had served as if they loved her. Mr. Eliot did not believe that his life would be long-sometimes an intense weariness came upon him, when he felt not to care how soon it ended, if only he could see his darling secure in the possession of a kind loving man and honourable, as he knew his nephew to be. Still he could not urge her, command her-Rous was impatient enough, but he would not have endured that she should be driven into his arms. No, let her come freely—he was so

sure of her love that he could give her a little play.

"Yes, yes, give her a little play—she is but a child, and does not know what she wants. But if I drop, what then?" suggested the Squire. "There will be a space to wait, there will be a difficulty with your father—with hers, perhaps. And what a strange life for her meantime, running to and fro with an itinerant artist! for that is what John Fenwick seems to be."

Rous refused to regard the contingency of his uncle's death, or to plan anything for himself in the view of it. Katherine was not in bondage to comforts, she had the elasticity of high courage, he should not be afraid of carrying her to India.

"That," said the Squire, "you shall never do in my lifetime, with my consent. India!"

"As delicately bred ladies go out there every day. But I am not desiring that. I spoke only of her capabilities. See how cheerful she is even now. Oh, she is a dear little Kate to go through the world with, she has plenty of pluck," rejoined Rous.

It was true enough. Katherine had brightened up, and Rous had an air of victorious determination—they were happy and miserable, down-hearted and resolute, wise and foolish a hundred times a day.

But the poor Squire was always more or less oppressed, overburdened, vext with conflicting duties and desires. He had given his nephew excellent advice, and nothing would have relieved him more than to hear that Rous had persuaded Katherine to aid and abet him in setting it at nought.

By the last spurs of the Alps, by many a strong castle of ancient days, by famous towns and pleasant villages, across low, marshy fields where the maize was springing, through groves of mulberry-trees and green arcades of vines, runs the road to Padua. It was between seven and eight o'clock when the travellers arrived there, and drove in a light carriage to the "Golden Eagle"—the time when the citizens and students of the university pour out into the streets 'to enjoy the cool of the evening, and the pavements were thronged. The students of Padua are not renowned for a quiet and modest behaviour. Madame indulgently remarked that they were no worse than young men in a multitude everywhere. Like will to like. Rous Eliot was amused and attracted, and forsook Katherine's mild society for the remainder of the evening. The Squire also, who had a lively recollection of Padua when he was young himself, and not averse to harmless riot, forsook it too, and got rid of his woes and perplexities

for a little while amidst the joyous clamour of the city out of doors.

Katherine followed them with a wistful imagination. "No, dear child," said Madame, reading her thoughts, "we cannot have their pastimes. They require much more than ourselves to keep them in good-humour. Men are so—they will come back to us when they are tired. It will be pleasure to them, walking arm-in-arm with a cigar in the gay, lighted streets; but it would not be pleasure to us, jostling those noisy young men."

Katherine thought it would be more pleasure than doing nothing—Rous had told her nothing could be done in their quest till the morrow. She stood at a window looking towards a great church, oriental in aspect, with numerous cupolas. "Shall we go to church, Maddie? I think I hear music," she proposed suddenly. "I am restless, and that would quieten me more than anything."

Madame acceded—she was always glad to go to church. By good-luck a service was in progress, with exposition of the Holy Sacrament. There had been a sermon which was over, and now in front of the chapel of the dedicatory saint—St. Antonio of Padua—was gathered a crowd of humble adorers. There was a brilliant illumination of silver candlesticks upon the altar and of golden lamps pendant

from the roof, and gradual gloom in the vast aisles beyond. Katherine wished she could understand the ceremony; for the devotion of the worshippers infected her. On the steps of the altar were grouped a venerable old man, a blind girl, and many poor infirm persons, quite rapt away from their sordid miseries. A pace below, within the circle of the light, was the most touching picture of a beautiful young mother with two little children; one had brought his toy cart and horses into church, and played with them softly, pausing now and again to look up at his mother, and press his tiny hands together, like the angels in the sacred frescoes on the walls, while his sister, a year more discreet, watched him with demure dark eyes peeping past her mother's apron. Madame's next neighbour was an old gentleman who had spread his handkerchief on the footboard of the bench for his dog to lie and sleep on. There was something in this simplicity of poor and lonely people bringing their helpless babes and pets into the splendid church that stirred Katherine's deepest sympathy. It did her good to see it. All her religion consisted yet in love and trust as theirs did.

Myriads of stars shone in the heavens when she and Madame retired to rest that night, and Katherine—her heart quietened as she had hoped—slum-

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bered peacefully the whole night through. Mr. Eliot and his nephew had been to the theatre, but they were both beforehand with the ladies in the morning. notwithstanding. When they went down to breakfast, Rous was just laying aside the Travellers' Book. Twice within the year he had found the name of John Fenwick, the later date tallying with the time of his leaving Verona. But there was no Giuseppe at the "Golden Eagle" to furnish personal reminiscences of the vagrant artist. He had come and gone unnoticed amongst the guests of a day, and had not recorded his next destination. The landlord of the inn knew only one Englishman resident at Padua; an old gentleman settled there many years, who lived on the way to the Chapel of the Arena.

"The Chapel of the Arena—that is where Giotto's frescoes are," said the Squire. Rous proposed that they should take a carriage and drive out there, making inquiries on the road for this Englishman, and for the haunts of the artist fraternity.

By accident or misdirection they arrived at the Arena without discovering the house of their countryman.

"It is only a garden," said Katherine, as the proprietor let them in at a door in a wall where hung a bell. Literally a garden of herbs, that has the form of a Roman amphitheatre, but no other trace of one. Wild weeds and grasses fringe its sun-baked walls. They walked down a straight alley of vines to the chapel—a plain brick building, lighted by round-headed windows, glazed in the old Venetian manner with small circular panes of dim thick glass. The doors stood wide open to the sun, and playing about the steps were two children, over whom a lady with a basket of domestic needlework kept watch and ward. They belonged to an artist who sat on a raised platform making a copy of one of the frescoes.

The sanctuary was almost blocked with workmen's trestles and planks, tools and materials. Repairs and restorations were in progress. The roof was newly-emblazoned with gold stars on a blue ground. Mr. Eliot seemed content to rest and look round at what he had studied long before, when such scenes had more interest for him than they could ever have again. Madame prosecuted her researches with praiseworthy diligence, got into talk with a stray carpenter, and learnt all that was intended to be done in the chapel; information with which she immediately proceeded to edify the Squire. He was perfectly indifferent, but he listened politely. The young people avoided the excellent old lady's

too oppressive instructions, and went to and fro to see what they could see amidst the scaffolds and ladders. The simple unity of the building was soon understood,—one spacious aisle, a semicircular tribune; below the round-topt, deep, narrow windows, decorative designs in monochrome, emblems, virtues and vices; between them and above, rising in three tiers of frescoes, the leading incidents in the Life of our Lord, according to the Evangelists and the traditions of the Church.

In its day, in the "ages of faith," it must have been lovely and pleasant to eyes devout. But to eyes that are only curious, it is scarcely beautiful at all. Rous and Katherine were not half so enthusiastic over the famous paintings as Madame desired. She bade them consider that they were executed nearly six hundred years ago, and while Giotto was young. The amateur critics freely accorded to the painter simplicity of feeling, and pathetic suggestiveness, but affirmed that Madame enlarged too much on the elegance of the figures and beauty of the faces. The Squire halted between the two opinions. He said Giotto told his story clearly; and in the days when religious pictures were the only books of the poor, to tell them thus naïvely the Life of Christ and the Blessed Mary was a merit worthy of all the praise bestowed upon him. Then he singled

out the Flight into Egypt as admirably designed, and the women in the Marriage Procession of the Virgin as full of grace.

"That is a prettier picture than any of them," said Rous, regarding the lady beyond the doorway.

The lady had a dark Italian face. She was resting from her work, and one of the children, dusk like herself, leant against her knees, pointing along the lines of a book that lay in her lap, while the other stood with an arm round her neck, and a rosy cheek pressed up to hers—a rosy cheek and auburn hair like an English child. The changeful green shadow of trees flickered about them, and they composed, indeed, into a very pretty picture; but Madame could not see it, and rejoined that my lord's taste was crude and uncultivated yet, and he must not throw away his opportunities of refining it.

The artist on the platform turned his head and looked first at the speakers, then at his wife and children. He had a pair of very keen blue eyes, a tanned skin, and a large red beard. He was not at all handsome. "Prussian," whispered Madame, and averted her French nose with calm disdain. The painter went on with his work, accompanying it with a subdued whistle, and the strangers went away into the garden.

The proprietor kept bees, and the Squire, who informed himself of everything new that could add to the benefits of country life, entered into conversation with the woman who was minding them. While they talked and Madame listened, Katherine and Rous made acquaintance with the two children. They came hand-in-hand to see what might be going on of amusing, and accepted each a stick of chocolate which Kate presented as a preliminary offering. Kisses and confidences resulted. confessed herself afraid of the bees: Monna was not afraid of them, because they had never stung her: but they had stung Nina-thus they were understood to lisp in a patois that was half gesture and half Italian speech. The elder could not be more than four years old—she was the rosy, fair one. The younger was the brown cherub, with plump cheeks, a dimpled mouth, and eyes that were black only through their long lashes. When they looked winsomely up in Katherine's they were grey, beautiful, loving eyes.

A voice called for Monna—the artist's voice, and the little creatures ran off. It was for an interval of rest and play; for when Rous and Katherine came out of the bee-garden amongst the vines, all three were lying at the lady's feet, and the father was feeding his birdies with cherries out of a basket.

There was bread and wine laid on a napkin—no doubt, the artist's task kept him at the chapel all day, and they lived there from morning till night.

"What an idyllic scene," said Kate. "Don't they look happy and contented? I should like to ask if they know a painter called John Fenwick." Rous demurred to this, and as they had already turned away to avoid the appearance of curiosity, they did not turn back again, but sauntered to the door at which the carriage waited.

In a few minutes Madame and the Squire joined them, and they drove away to renew their search after the Englishman. They found him, at last. An old gentleman in spectacles, with white hair and a velvet cap, came out on his balcony over the street, and peered down upon them as the carriage halted at a wide gateway under a deep arcade. Rous had jumped out, and was ringing at the bell. The gentleman himself was there when a servant opened it. Rous apologized, presented his uncle's card, and explained his business. He got a cordial reception.

"Step in—Will not the ladies step in too, and take a walk round my garden? Mr. Eliot of Bently is not a stranger to me, and John Fenwick is my friend."

The Squire, at the same moment, was doubtfully

recognizing an acquaintance of school and college days, who had gone abroad so long ago that he was almost forgotten at home. "And so you have settled at Padua?" he said as they shook hands.

"I have been settled at Padua for seven-andtwenty years." They looked at each other with surprise to see how grey they had grown. "You are married? These are your young folks?" said the exile.—Mr. Danvers.

"My daughter and my nephew," replied the Squire. "You remember my brother Henry? Colonel Eliot. He is now on his way from India. We hope that he will join us in Venice." (Rous glanced hurriedly at Katherine—she had not heard, she was not listening apparently.)

Thus they talked, reviving past events and memories, asking and answering questions, moving a few paces, then standing still. They crossed a large paved hall, and a sunny court-yard from which opened the offices of a considerable establishment. Three handsome dogs lay sleeping under the shadow of a wall clothed over with a blooming wisteria, a shaven, pink-eyed poodle attached itself affectionately to its master, a familiar pony, used to caresses, stood at the stable-door, an immense brindled cat and kittens played at mousing round a water-butt, a crowd of domestic poultry clucked

and squabbled, caged birds hung amongst the trellised green, singing as if they were at liberty.

They entered the garden by a flowery coveredway. It was an old-fashioned English manor-garden, walled round, and every wall that caught the sun trained over with fruit-trees. Where peaches and nectarines would not ripen, china-roses, blush and crimson, made a luxuriant tapestry of flower and fragrance. The open paths, bordered with espaliers, were fringed besides with carnations, stocks red, white and purple, mignonette and other sweet, low-growing things. Such standard roses, such dwarf roses, such pillar and trailing roses, all in their first flush of blossom, were rare to see. Midsummer at Bently was not so rich. The exile loved his garden. He heard Katherine cry out with delight and admiration, and his pleasure was so vivid that he graciously presented to her an exquisite half-blown rose and bud from the bush that she was so enraptured with.

"You are a good girl, I know," said he—and thought that even his pet roses were not lovelier.

Katherine thanked him with a charming blush, and the old man glanced from her to Rous inquisitively. "Cousins and something more," was his private reflection. Then with a sudden remem-

brance of what the young stranger had said to him at the gate, he asked: "Who is it wants to know about John Fenwick?"

Katherine started visibly; for Rous had told her nothing yet.

"All of us," said the Squire. "We have a quite peculiar interest in John Fenwick."

"He was in Padua the other day, and probably he is here still. He has a commission on hand for one of your *millionaires* in England: mural decorations for a little church that he is building on his property. Fenwick works hard, poor fellow, for his sweet wife and children."

Here was another revelation, complication! Katherine's heart seemed to stand still. Madame alone preserved her perfect composure. "Perhaps he was painting to-day at the Chapel of the Arena?" she said interrogatively.

"It is very likely. He is copying some of the frescoes. That is his business at present in Padua."

Not another word was spoken on that subject. A servant was approaching with a tray on which were glasses of iced lemonade and a plate of biscuits. He carried it into a large circular bower of vines, and set it down on the rustic table there. The exile made a sign for his visitors to accept his

hospitality. They seated themselves in the cool shade, and the conversation was quietly resumed about things and people at home. A minute had been enough to restore the surface calm and self-possession of everybody, but poor Katherine. The world was going round with her. Madame's "Prussian" was then, in fact, her father, that diligent painter whom she had seen this morning; and he was married to a beautiful Italian wife, and had two little girls who were her sisters. Her sisters! Could it be true or was she dreaming? Was it Rous's voice that she heard? It sounded as from a long way off; it came muffled as through a thick curtain.

Some one offered to her lips the iced water. "Drink, Kate." She drank and was revived. "Please don't faint, there is no reason why," was added in a whisper. It was Rous leaning over her. The bewildered sensation passed off, but she felt weak, tremulous and shaken. She wished herself away, anywhere safe from observation.

Madame interpreted her wan beseeching looks aright, and proposed to return with her to the "Golden Eagle."

"Yes, yes, take her home and take care of her," said the Squire with hasty acquiescence, almost as white as herself.

Mr. Danvers perceived that there was a mystery and some trouble afoot, and did not seek to delay them. Mr. Eliot then made an effort and returned to the cause that had brought them to Italy. He asked for an introduction to Mr. Fenwick, but he did not enter into the painful, tedious explanation why he was wanted. That might wait—that might come better from Mr. Fenwick himself to Mr. Danvers, who called him his friend.

## XI.

## In the Cloisters of St. Antonio.

MR. DANVERS was ready to oblige Mr. Eliot on the spot. He wrote a note to Mr. Fenwick, which the Squire enclosed in another note from himself, urgently requesting an interview that day; and as the artist's lodging was not known, a messenger was sent to find him at his work. A pencilled answer was returned:—Mr. Fenwick would wait upon Mr. Eliot at the "Golden Eagle" in the evening.

With this prospect before them the gentlemen went back to their inn. Katherine had been lying down, but she was up again, and very restless; and Madame had just prevailed on her to go across the piazza to the church, and divert her mind with what was to be seen there. Rous proposed to escort her, and as Madame was glad to be dispensed from the fatigue of the visitation, and the Squire was desirous of being alone for awhile, they went by themselves.

The hours did not lag wearily with those two together. First they halted at the stalls before the

doors, where the women sold rosaries and queer little penny images and histories of St. Antonio. Next, they spent a long time studying the fine reliefs in marble that surround the sumptuous shrine of the saint. After that they were ready to rest on the steps of the altar of a nut-brown Virgin Mary that adjoins it. When they had rested, they tried to make out the frescoes in the chapel whence St. James was deposed in favour of St. Felix, whose bones lie buried there. The mountainous sepulchral monuments they did not admire. Rous was so profane as to express a wish that he could make a clean sweep of such proud memorials of dust and ashes out of all churches.

They passed into the cloisters. Here it was more airy, and on the shady side cool enough. A few shrubs and flowers were growing neglected in the long grass. All round on this secluded spot looked down the windows of the ancient conventual buildings and the canons' houses.

"What o'clock does 'in the evening' mean?"
Katherine asked after a long meditative silence.
Rous had warned her of the event that was about to happen, and she had seen her father's note—had taken possession of it.

"After dinner, from seven to nine o'clock—any time,"

Kate fell musing again. "How should you like to live here, Cousin Rous?" was her next foolish question. "Those two little windows up in the corner must belong to somebody who has a quiet heart—see the pretty bird-cages in the trellis of nasturtiums."

"Dear Kate, I should not like to live here at all!" was the very natural, astonished reply of the young lover. "Nor would you. Our vocation is quite different. We shall go back to Bently very soon, now that the main object of our journey is accomplished."

"Do you think we shall? I wish I could believe it! But I have a thousand fears! Apprehensions crowd thick upon me the moment I begin to try to look forward."

"Then don't try to look forward, you dear little, silly Kate! Remember your catechism and the Gospel philosophy you were taught before you cut your second teeth. Let me be eyes to you, let me give you your daily bread, and fend off from you the evils that belong to to-morrow! Have more faith in me, dearest." This was easy to say, but Rous had his apprehensions too, that Katherine knew nothing about. He would not have had her guess them for the world; because, since Sunday, he had been revolving in his mind a master-stroke

of policy, which now he resolved to execute; and lest her discursive fancy should rove that way, he guided the conversation back to real and present events. "I shall rejoice when this formidable encounter between the Squire and Mr. Fenwick is over. It is a dilemma to fall in dispute between two fathers—I shall intervene, and carry you off from them both!"

A double file of school-girls, marshalled by hooded Sisters, swept chattering through the cloisters, with sidelong glances at the tall, fair stature of the lover and the pretty lady sitting on a tomb. Their passage interrupted Rous at a critical moment. He had to begin again, to find a new opening. "Amongst all your imaginings, Kate, did you ever imagine your father married again? You never did! Nor I. And yet it was the likeliest thing that could have occurred."

"It is the likely things that baffle our conjectures," sighed Katherine. "It was quite a shock of disappointment to me. Now, I thought, I shall not be first, even with him — even he will not want me."

"Very wicked and selfish it was of you to think so, then! You ought to have instantly rejoiced and given thanks."

"Shall I tell you, Cousin Rous, what I have

been really fancying? Oh, such a silly, sentimental programme! I had pictured to myself a pathetic exile, haunted by sorrowful remembrances of my mother, and I was meaning to be all devotion, all consolation to him. I had forgotten the years and years ago that it happened."

"And what was to have become of me!" inquired her lover with a countenance amazed. "You did not consider that! Oh, you cool little Kate! Ah, yes, you may plead penitence, but I shall take time to forgive you! Mr. Fenwick has evidently a great deal of common sense. I approve of him and his belongings. He needs no consolation and no sacrifices. He will be satisfied to see you reasonable and happy; he will be immensely relieved and delighted to know that there is a strong and willing young man ready to take you off his hands, without nonsense or tiresome delays."

Rous Eliot had not confessed to Katherine about those Indian letters received and answered at Verona, nor did he intend to confess. Colonel Eliot's original veto was also a secret to her, so far as he knew, and he meant it to remain a secret. He did not believe in her denials—of course, he did not. She betrayed too often that her joy, hope, trust, confidence were all grounded in him; she often told him that he was "so good" to her, and it was true.

Katherine's Trial,

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But there was a power of gentle resistance in her that he ardently desired to overcome. He was bent on securing her solemn word and troth before Colonel Eliot appeared upon the scene; because if she made discovery of his father's opposition she was very likely to stand out against himself until love taught her some of its severer lessons, and she was glad to come to him for peace. Now Rous, like the Squire, had that pitifulness of nature that would avert every form of suffering from those he was tender of; and he knew that Katherine, once his own, he could assure her a joyful life. With confident persuasiveness he therefore urged his suit-Katherine listened, struggled, felt as if she were being drawn from her own mastery; put in her plea, her rejoinder, her defence. But she had a losing cause.

"Kate, the wise man said long ago that there was a time to speak and a time to be silent. I have been silent long enough, now I must speak; and I must have an answer," said Rous with compelling eyes upon her. She knew very well what was coming, and tried to avert her face. He went on. "Any day the Squire may give the word to turn home again. You will come with us—with me—is it not so? Promise me—John Fenwick, with his handsome wife and little children, is not

likely to put any impediment in the way; but I want your promise, notwithstanding. Say, that whatever happens, you will be on my side, and will not risk our happiness for scruples of filial duty where none is due."

Kate blushed. Was it that she loved to make herself entreated when she replied: "You know, dear Rous, that I said we were not engaged. That is over. We are only friends and cousins."

"And you know, dear Kate, that I said our engagement continued. One party to a contract cannot break it without consent of the other. Don't pretend that anything is over—Do I not know that Kate loves me, at least half as well as I love her? Shall I remind you of something?"

"I am sure you will be neither ungenerous nor unkind to me, Rous!"

"Then, Kate, do not you be ungenerous or unkind to me!"

Kate trembled. Rous got up and walked away from her, walked all round the cloisters, stopping often on a plausible pretence of examining the inscriptions on the old gravestones. But he did not see a letter of them. Kate followed him with her eyes, and did not feel that she loved him less because he had just made her a little afraid of him. After all, was she not behaving wilfully, rather like

a spoilt child, over-wise in her own conceits? He was thinking that though their engagement might make some dissension with his father, dissension with his father would be much more easily remediable than a breach with herself. There be lovers' quartels that are not a renewal of love, and separations which are for life and death. Rous Eliot was well aware of this. He had several years' advantage of Katherine in knowledge of human nature. He loved her with all his heart and all his strength, but he reflected that if she were taken from him now, in this troublesome crisis of their affairs, the chances were as ten to one that they would never come together again. He would have to return to his regimental duties in India, and she would either stay in Italy with her newly discovered kinsfolk, and acquire a taste for the pleasant vagrancy of foreign life, or she would go home with the Squire, and be exposed to the dangers and temptations of idleness at Bently. In five years' time, before he could expect to get leave again, they would have matured into absolute strangers to each other. They would have wasted their love. This last idea spurred him to more vehement entreaty. should he let her blindly, ignorantly, perversely throw away the grace of both their lives?

"I will not let her go! If I lose her it will be

my own fault!" he said, and came back to her knees with passionate arguments that filled her with a delicious terror.

Kate's pride was by no means invincible. She had a sweet docility with those who mastered her affections and confidence. "Dear Rous, tell me what you would have me do?" she said with quivering lips, and eyes tearfully bright.

"I would have you repent of your coldness, and return to the warm true love you used to show me. That is what I would have you do, Kate, and nothing less will content me."

"You know it was not for myself's sake I set you at liberty."

"You could not set me at liberty. You talk like a child! You pretend to offer me the opportunity of changing my mind—you would break your little heart if I did! And I don't want the opportunity—I want Katherine. While I believed her faithful, I was too confident, perhaps. When she looks at me so innocently, and tells me that is over, I find that I have been spending my love on a poor little soul who does not know what love is!"

"Indeed, Rous, but I am faithful! I love you the best I can—I would go with you to India or to anywhere if you wished me to go, and papa would,"

pleaded Kate, driven by his reproaches to eager self-defence, and self-betrayal.

"She says she loves me the best she can," echoed Rous with a wily triumphant air—"The best she can! Well, I'll believe her, and teach her to love me better, that's all! But Kate must not vex me any more with ungenerous doubts—I could not bear it patiently again. My pretty Kate!" He was all tenderness, all grateful enthusiasm, now he had gained his cause. "Would she go with me to India or to anywhere if I wished her to go? That is like her devotion! She may be sure I will require of her nothing that is not for her good and her pleasure too. Only she must let me be judge."

"You persuade me to put my fate out of my own hands," said Kate faintly.

"It will be safer in mine—Trust me! Why do you look so pale, Kate? Love should be rosy. Tell me how happy you are."

She did not answer him; her heart was fluttering like a bird. Rous held one of her hands, and divined how over-wrought she was, but he would not let pass the advantage he had gained. "Give me your troth once more. I will have it in the old words, Kate, and here is a ring to keep you in remembrance."

He slipped the ring, a circle of amethysts, on

her heart-finger, and kissed it. She let him have his way and renewed her troth in the old words, as he asked her: "'I promise you, Rous, that I will never marry while you are a bachelor.' And now let us go home."

"Oh! Kate, you are too passive by half! But you shall love me much more fondly yet—you will, when your mind is not divided by foolish fears! You shake all over—Are you so tired, my own?"

"Very tired, indeed, Rous. How I should like a breezy canter on Bonnybelle over Hollerby Wold! If I thought nobody would see, I should like you to carry me across the piazza."

Rous was gratified, and would have done it with proud delight had Kate's feet actually refused to serve her.

Madame saw them coming, and met them on the stairs. "A hard day's work," said she, "takes less out of us than these troublesome feelings. What a blessed comfort will be a quiet life when we have done with them!"

## XII.

## At the "Aquila D'Oro."

JOHN FENWICK presented himself at the "Golden Eagle" shortly after eight o'clock, and was ushered upstairs to the sitting-room where Mr. Eliot and his nephew awaited him. He halted half a minute in the doorway as if he thought there must be some mistake-a little gentleman in loose brown velvet clothing, a young man still, with a fine forehead, a ruddy complexion darkened by the sun, tawny hair and luxuriant beard scattered over his white waistcoat -- an exquisitely neat and clean little gentleman, as English as if he had never been out of England. In obedience to a polite invitation from Rous Eliot he advanced, seated himself opposite the window, and glanced at the Squire with shrewd, pleasant inquiry. He very soon discerned that he had not been summoned on professional business, and that the old man had a nervous difficulty in speaking to And, indeed, the Squire was wishing for Mr. Morgan's aid, or that he had deputed his nephew beforehand to explain the case. At last, he said abruptly, addressing Rous: "Perhaps we had better

have Katherine in at once. There may be something in her appearance that Mr. Fenwick might recognize."

"Kate cannot bear much more to-day; we must spare her all she can be spared," was Rous's reply aside.

Mr. Fenwick glanced from one to the other in visible perplexity. "Kate—who is Kate?" he asked in a low under-tone, speaking more to himself than to them.

"Your first wife was 'Kate,' was she not? And you had an infant who was baptized as 'Katherine'?" said the Squire huskily.

"That is true. I buried my poor young wife in London within eighteen months of our marriage, and our baby did not survive her many weeks."

"That is your belief. You have never had any reason to doubt that the child really died?"

"None." Mr. Fenwick was attentive, interested, but in no wise disturbed.

"Yet she did not die. She was taken possession of by my wife, and imposed upon me as our own. For more than seventeen years she has lived in my house, and has been to me as a daughter."

"And she is now with you in Padua? I should like to see her."

Rous Eliot went to call her. In his absence

neither Mr. Eliot nor Mr. Fenwick spoke. "Come, Kate, there is nothing more to fear. He is just what Giuseppe said. Cheer up! Have a good heart!" The excitement brought a beautiful glow of colour into Katherine's face, and Rous detained her for a moment to see that she was rested, and to hear her say that she was happy. "Yes, yes, dear! quite safe and contented if I belong to you!" was her hurried, blushing whisper.

As she entered the room John Fenwick stood up, and stretched out his hands to her. There was not light enough to witness the finer shades of their emotion, but there was quite light enough for each to know the other again. They were silent for a full minute. Katherine thought she had a very young father. John Fenwick thought he had an amazingly pretty daughter, much too old for him, so he said: "Ah, well, we shall be playfellows, that's all!" and Katherine said, "Yes," with April sunshine flowing over her face.

The cloud of her vagaries was dispersed. The neat little bearded gentleman was not embarrassed by the situation. Perhaps he was yet too astonished to be embarrassed. "I see a likeness over strong to be denied," he said, when they were sat down. And then he waited with an air of deference for the poor Squire to speak again.

"I did not bring Katherine here to give her up to you, but because, this painful revelation being made in my house, it was necessary to trace those who might possibly claim authority over her future life and actions," Mr. Eliot said with an effort painful and visible. Katherine stole to his side and whispered: "No, no, papa!" He took hold of her hand, stroked it, gazed in her face, and went on: "By all the love and allegiance of her warm little heart she certainly is mine, though you have the name of her father. I am sure you will leave her to me still, for you are blessed in the possession of other sweet children."

"We have three-one son, and two girls."

"Have I, then, a brother?" said Katherine, as if the news pleased her. The Squire wondered what ailed her that she seemed so glad.

"Yes. He is older than his sisters. Them you saw with their mother at Giotto's chapel. Luigi is at Ravenna with his grand-parents." All this passed in a few minutes. It was true, it sounded so natural—yet, somehow, so unreal.

Madame Roussel entered, preceding a waiter who brought in coffee and ices. The sultriness of the evening made the ices very acceptable, and the act of eating them broke the strained thread of the story that had to be told. Mr. Eliot refused to have

candles lighted; he preferred to go out into the piazza, and walk and talk with Mr. Fenwick there. Rous accompanied them, and Katherine was left indoors with a kind good-night from all-an intimation that she would see them no more until the morning. She was satisfied that it should be so. She felt light as a feather. The incubus of uncertainty that had weighed on her since the beginning of sorrows was gone. Heart, mind, imagination were all relieved from a dreary load. The heroic proportions of her visionary father were diminished, but she felt that she could love the real man, call him by that title of dignity, or call him "playfellow" as he had dubbed himself. She thanked God, and slept perfectly that night, for the joy she had in her heart because of him and her dear Cousin Rous.

Out on the piazza (one of those open, irregular spaces which are so frequent in Padua and give it such an airy largeness of aspect) Mr. Eliot recounted to Mr. Fenwick the details in proof of Katherine's identity that Mr. Morgan had laboriously collected. The artist said very little—in fact, what could he say? Here was a surprising allegation, and in Katherine's face a resemblance as surprising, not only to the poor young wife of his early love, but also to his own mother who had been lying at rest for twelve years in Eversley churchyard. He said

that he had been struck by Katherine's countenance in the garden.

The interview was not long, but it was long enough for every present purpose. The Squire gave his confidence to John Fenwick as Katherine's father and legal guardian without reserve. Both faced the troublesome facts that brought them into connection, but neither, by unnecessary words evoked the useless pains of remembrance. When Mr. Eliot had finished that chapter of his communications, he proposed to postpone the rest; and Mr. Fenwick took his leave, saying that he had his lodging in the house at the Arena, and should be found on the morrow all day at work in the chapel. Perhaps Katherine would come to him there—the daylight hours were precious.

"Thank heaven that is over!" muttered the Squire, clinging to his nephew's arm as they walked back to their inn.

"Yes—Katherine's father is found, and how easily he takes the gift of a daughter!" said Rous. "He is a very sober person altogether—he is absorbed in his work; and does not even say that he shall make Kate's visit a holiday! He reads no English newspapers, keeps up no correspondence with home—he had not heard an echo of all our inquiries—"

"He will not want to rob us of her, Rous?"

"Oh, no! I find not one objection to him personally. If to be Katherine Eliot's cousin was to debar me from having her for my wife, I can bear her translation into Katherine Fenwick with more than equanimity. This is the seed of good for us in things evil—the mysterious seed that moralists try to console us with."

"You are compensated, Rous, but I feel a woeful loss."

"We will try to make it up to you, sir. Kate and I have come to a perfect understanding. This very afternoon I won a renewal of her promise—a renewal without conditions; and I shall hold her to it."

"Did you so? That is well. That accounts for her bright face, God bless her! But it has been a heavy day to me. And now I must write to my poor wife at home, and tell her it is over."

#### XIII.

#### Kin and Kind.

John Fennick lighted a cigar as an aid to reflection, and took his way homewards very leisurely. The street he followed was long and straight, and led him past Mr. Danvers' house. He suddenly bethought him of staying his steps there to take counsel with his old friend on this resuscitation of a daughter resigned as dead in her infancy. The circumstances began to seem more strange and bewildering as he recited them to himself; but he could not doubt the truth of them. He wanted to see how they appeared to a man of cool, experienced and independent judgment before laying the burden of such extraordinary and embarrassing news on the easy mind of his wife.

Mr. Danvers was in his garden inhaling the evening fragrance of his flowers; the twilight of stars was overhead and a gentle rustle in the leaves. He supposed that the artist had dropped in to spend an idle hour as his occasional custom was after his day's-work. "This is kind to give me your company—it is a relief from my own," said he, like all

solitaries thinking of himself first. "I have had English visitors to-day, and to be reminded of how long my exile has lasted always puts me out of humour." John Fenwick let him talk of his own affairs and regrets without interruption, though they were an old, old story that he had listened to a hundred times before. When his reminiscences were done Mr. Danvers remembered what was the event that had evoked them, and added with an afterthought: "It was Mr. Eliot of Bently who called upon me with two young members of his family; and as I understood him he had some concern with you. By-the-by, he wanted your address—I recollect now—yes, yes."

John Fenwick availed himself of the opportunity to tell what that concern was. Mr. Danvers had a general knowledge of his life and of his early misadventure; for they had become acquainted at Verona on the young artist's first visit to Italy when he was mourning for Katherine's mother. The old gentleman heard all, and was silent for several minutes in true sympathy and interest. Then he remarked that there was nothing impossible or even improbable in the tale—but what a sad tale it was for Mr. Eliot! That aspect of the romance touched him most. Of Katherine he said, that she was a lovely young creature, and not much to be pitied,

perhaps; for she had been well cared for, and well brought up, and her life to come was evidently laid out for her.

The artist made some inquiries respecting the Eliots—their place of abode, condition and means. Mr. Danvers gave him all the information he was possessed of. The Eliots, he said, were county people, long seated at Bently, rich, and of the most honourable traditions. John Fenwick heard these tidings with a satisfied resignation.

"Mr. Eliot does not dream of giving the young lady up, and that is well—I could not desire it," he said. "She has lost nothing, perhaps, by being bred amongst gentlefolks instead of amongst vagabonds, but I have lost her. She can never be a daughter to me. Let those keep her who have her—my life is complete with Lisa and the little ones."

"Your paternal charge begins late, and you may see to the end of it already, if you please," said Mr. Danvers. "Mr. Rous Eliot is her suitor, and she loves him—so much I discerned in the half-hour they were together here. If they marry she will suffer no real change. She has ceased to be the heiress of Bently, but as the heir's wife she will miss nothing."

John Fenwick had no sense of proprietorship in the young lady who claimed him for her father, but

Katherine's Trial.

as he revolved the circumstances of which she had been the sport, he could not but feel a compassion for her. "I hope what you foresee may turn out true; for she has been used to live at ease, and is not fit to rough it with us. Yet I should wish her to know that she would have a protector in me at need—her position might be painful in the event of Mr. Ehot's death. But it is a waste of force to run into conjectures of what may or may not be! We have not spoken of the future at all, as yet. Tomorrow when I have seen her by herself I shall know more—we must be friends for my dear Kitty's sake, poor little mother! Lisa has a large heart, and will welcome her."

"No doubt of that. Your wife has a beautiful disposition."

The bees, the birds had all folded their wings when John Fenwick walked up the alley of vines to the house in the Arena. A lamp shone from an upper room where his wife awaited his return. He saw her shadow, she heard his step, though Nina and Monna were noisily chattering, still wide awake in their little beds. They met in the doorway with an embrace. Lisa was clingingly fond of her English husband. She had but few words of English speech, but she could tell him that she was happy,

was glad, that she loved him. For longer confidences they used Italian, and that was why John Fenwick bade her come out into the garden—those wakeful babies had ears, and he had a confession to make her. She came out at once, and they paced the green walks hand-in-hand for a long hour by the stars, while he told her the story that had been told to him. Of his early marriage and bereavement she was perfectly informed.

Lisa found cause for tears in the new revelation. "Ah, the bad wife!" said she: "the cruel, deceitful wife! And does he forgive her, the poor old man? I am not sad for the girl—she gains a second father; but I am very pitiful for him. Think if it were Nina and me and you, dear heart! Will she leave him to live with us?"

"No, that is improbable. But I should like her to know us and love us for many reasons."

"I will do my part. She cannot help but love Luigi and the little ones."

"To-morrow she is coming here. You will talk to her—tell her of ourselves and our ways; they will be new to her. Tell her of Ravenna and your father's house, and the pine-forest. She is accustomed to the country, and would be amused there."

"We will make her a fete, my friend; she shall

be very gay and happy. I promise you, she shall not be afraid of us."

John Fenwick was satisfied that his wife would show all tenderness to Katherine, but it was not possible that he should expect the morning quite free from anxiety. His rest was often in his work, and he got several hours of it before the strangers at the "Golden Eagle" were well astir. When Katherine arrived she hoped she was not too earlyit was twelve o'clock. Rous Eliot brought her, and was invited to stay; but he stayed only a short time, and left under an engagement to return in the cool of the evening to take her home. So here was Katherine, cast on her new kinsfolk and her own devices for the remainder of the day. It was a very beautiful day fortunately, and they could sit out of doors under the trees, and make acquaintance amidst a variety of simple distractions that wonderfully aided their shy endeavours to that end.

The artist had laid aside his tools and come down from his platform. "Yes," he said in answer to a half suggestion, half inquiry of Katherine's; "I have painted many original pictures—scenes of Italian life chiefly—but there is a more constant demand for copies of popular pictures, and betweenwhiles, when my fancy is dull, I make copies. Occasionally I work on commission, and that is the best

of all; these frescoes that I am copying are for the adornment of a new village church near Warrington. It is wiser to drudge with my hands to provide for our young birds than to wear the imagination by perpetual seeking after new effects; so I secure to myself intervals of perfect liberty when I can think and invent, and feel a pure joy in the exercise of art."

"When we return to Ravenna one of these intervals will be yours, my friend," said his wife gently.

First impressions go for much, and these, as be tween Lisa and Katherine, were extremely favourable. Lisa was quite the matron, with a true dignity in her affectionate manners. There was a simplicity of confidence in all she said and did that made Katherine feel, as she expressed it, that she should be safe in reliance upon her. And Lisa, on her side, found Katherine's meek looks very charming; she betrayed no pride to chill and torment a household, no exacting selfishness to fill it with rivalries. She possessed her father's warm heart, and a clear head like his—precious gifts in domestic life. Lisa thought that she could live with her, and said so: "Before May is out we shall return to Ravenna, and you must come with us."

"Yes, Kate, that will be an excellent plan; there



we shall learn to know one another," added John Fenwick. "Our home—our only settled home—is with my wife's family, and in the house where she was born. But for the good nursing I found under that roof eight years ago, I should not be here to tell the tale."

"Ah, my friend, I tremble when I think of that perilous time!" whispered Lisa.

"Tell me all about it!" cried Katherine, with eager interest.

"All about it would be a very long story. It would be the story of how I fell among thieves, like the traveller in the Scripture, who stripped me, and wounded me, and left me half dead by the wayside, where I was discovered by that good Samaritan, my wife's father, who took me to his own house, and took care of me until I was on my feet again. And it would be the story of our courtship and marriage" (looking at Lisa kindly), "and of our children's birth, and of happy days more than I can number. Ravenna is an old-fashioned city, Kate, and people still marry for love there."

"And elsewhere too, I hope," says Kate, with a transient blush, and a thought of her Cousin Rous.

"When we are not at Ravenna, we are gipsies, and set up our tents wherever work is to be found,

as you see we have set it up here. The children come with us by turns—it will be Luigi's turn next; Nina and Monna count for one. Luigi is six years old, Kate, a dear, merry little chip! His mother will tell you a thousand pretty fables of his beauty, his vivacity, his wit—never was there such a wonderful little monkey, if you will believe her."

"He believes the same," said Lisa. "He had a fever once, the dear child—ah! if you had been there when the boy was sick, and we feared to lose him——"

John Fenwick would not stay for this sad recitation. He mounted his platform, and went on with his work in a cheerful humour. Presently he began to whistle—softly at first, then in sweet, clear notes; and what he whistled were tunes of old songs that Katherine's mother used to sing. Katherine would have been touched had she known it.

When their father began to whistle, from some scene of their play where they had been hiding, appeared Nina and Monna, and ran to their mother's lap, from which vantage-post they gazed at Katherine with large eyes of shy curiosity. Nothing had been told them, but something they guessed. What their profound thoughts were, they confided, perhaps, to each other, but to no one else; and they were very remarkably quiet until there was something to eat,

when, with their deft little teeth, they found their tongues again, and left nothing to be desired in the way of noise.

At noon the napkin was spread upon the ground as yesterday, and there was a loaf of sweet white bread, with fresh butter on a vine-leaf, and little cakes that tasted of aniseed; and there were oranges of the last season, red and juicy, and cherries in a basket, and because it was a fête, there was a bottle of good white wine—wine of Asti, foaming and sparkling—and iced water in a pitcher of glass.

"How kind you are to me!" said Katherine, taking her share in the simple collation, and tears sprang to her eyes. Tears were, indeed, very near her eyes all through these days.

"You are very well off," rejoined the artist in a gay tone, to avert a shower. "You stand in need of nothing, it seems to me. But if you did, we should not be found wanting, I hope."

"No, indeed. You should be one with us always for sweet charity's sake," said Lisa.

"And so we might entertain an angel unawares," added her husband.

When the collation was over, the artist resumed his work, and the children resumed their play. The heat increased, the drowsy hum of bees pervaded the sultry air. An hour, two hours passed. Lisa sewed and talked — talked as she had been instructed, of her home and parents and way of living at Ravenna.

"It is a dull city, and out of the world, people tell us, but I never find it dull where those I love are. Not many strangers come to Ravenna-only such as are enthusiasts for early Christian monuments, and it requires knowledge to appreciate them. My dear father is a famous archæologist, and will tell you all their history. But it is the pine-forest you will delight in. We have a farm in the marshes, and grow rice, and at the homestead we dry and store the pine cones: in the winter the women live by shelling the kernels. It is a treat to the little ones to go out there for the day—their father and I take them sometimes. We must go all together when you are with us." Then she spoke of the wild peasant people, and their hard laborious poverty; of blood-feuds amongst them, bequeathed from generation to generation, and Katherine listened as to a romantic chapter read out of a book, and reflected that it was better at Bently, the partial, home-sick girl!

Then it became her turn to talk, and Lisa drew out her confidence encouragingly. Katherine wanted to tell a little of herself, and she ended by telling all. By telling how her Cousin Rous loved her,



and how Mr. Eliot wished them to marry, and how she loved Rous so well that there would be no difficulty when the time came—at which Lisa laughing, kissed her, and said she was made to be loved and to be happy. When these heart-confidences began, there were pauses of silence between, growing longer and longer. It was tending towards the idle-time of the afternoon. Nina and Monna tired at their play, and sought their mother. Then all went indoors, except the artist—the bread-winner—toiling on in the cool shade of the old chapel. The shutters were closed; the house was hushed and dark. They lay down in the quiet gloom and slept, or dreamed with open eyes.

Katherine was one of the dreamers awake. A more peaceful mind she had not enjoyed since she came abroad, nor for many weeks before. She thought: "These are my own people, though we are strangers yet. This is their life; they are good, affectionate and industrious. If I lived with them, I must work too—I wonder if I could learn to copy pictures? I could mend and sew and teach the children—my brother, my sisters—and if I made up my mind that it was right I could not be very, very unhappy, could I? A submissive heart, says Maddie—that is what I should want. Still one may hope, and what I hope is that I may go back some day

to the life I know, with papa and dear, dear Cousin Rous! Oh, if I had wings like a dove now would I fly to Bently, and be at rest!—This is only May. They have not summer in the garden yet; the roses are not out there, except a few of the earliest sorts; but how pretty and luxuriant it is with the lilacs and laburnums and the fruit-trees in blossom! Oh, it is the prettiest place in the world, I think!" Less articulately she mused of her poor mamma; she recollected the friends who had shown her the unobtrusive kindness of sympathy in her trouble; and she longed for a peep at Bonnybelle, dull and idle, bereaved of her mistress and her companions. But always her musings returned to her "dear, dear Cousin Rous."

Probably an interval of unconsciousness abridged Katherine's meditations; for the afternoon was gone quickly, and six o'clock and dinner-time were very quickly come. The dinner was served in a spacious, bare room, and the children sat at table with their parents. A dish of rice, a roast of lamb, asparagus, stewed quails, a salad and fruit composed the dinner; there was red wine with it, and coffee after; and for decoration of the table there was a dull old Venetian goblet with tall reeds and grasses, scarlet poppies and ox-eyed daisies in it—Nina's gathering in the hot wild garden.

The artist had pleased himself with his work that day, and appeared with an air of perfect well-being and content. He heartily kissed the children who sat on either side of him, and asked his wife how she had amused her guest. Then he invited Katherine to talk.

"You went over to Eversley, Mr. Eliot said— Tell me what you saw there?"

"Where shall I begin?" asked Kate.

"Begin at the beginning—What sort of a day was it? Then I shall know how the old streets and the Minster were looking when you saw them. The weather makes all the difference in a picture."

So Katherine began at the beginning with the March wind and the sun, and how they met the dragoons coming riding with a fanfare of trumpets over the bridge—"I have run after them many a time, to see and hear!" said John Fenwick. "Go on—what next?"—And how they admired the shops, and were blown about in the Minster yard; then how they found College Lane and his early home; and how they went into the Minster and had a gossip with Old Job—to all of which Lisa listened, smiling and understanding enough to take pleasure in the recital.

"And after that we went to Dr. Rolandi's, and I

was shown two beautiful scenes in Verona that were painted by you, Katherine said, and paused.

"And I daresay you saw Dr. Rolandi himself sitting by the fire in the music-room, wrapt in his fur cloak?" suggested John Fenwick.

"Yes, we did, and his daughter was singing at the piano," rejoined Kate.

"That is just as I left him about a hundred years ago!"

Katherine did not repeat what the Doctor had said respecting John Fenwick's forgetfulness of his old friends—it was very clear that he had not forgotten them. Nor did she mention Miss Roland's name a second time.

"I am glad you went to Eversley," he said. "And did you go to Minster Service and hear the organ? Yes—and the anthem was beautiful. Lisa, I sang in the Minster choir when I was a small boy. Shall we make Luigi a little chorister? Eh, Nina, eh, Monna?"

Once the children were invited into the conversation, they took full possession of it; but by that time it was their turn—they had been very quiet and good until now. But climbed upon their father's knees, and were very noisy, taking affectionate liberties with his hair, his beard and all his homely features. He was a capital indulgent play-

fellow,—Katherine laughed to see them. After a great game of romps, he whistled them quiet with a favourite old tune of his Eversley days. Miss Rolandi sang that air still. There were passages in her father's life that Katherine would never do more than guess at. Then he set them down, and they ran out again under the vines with a large plunder of nuts and cherries, like a pair of pet squirrels.

Soon after arrived Mr. Eliot with his nephew, to pay their respects to the Signora, and to escort Katherine home. The visit was necessarily formal, but it was well meant and well received. And a family invitation to dine at the "Golden Eagle" the following day was tendered and accepted.

On the way back to their inn the Squire said: "Well, Katherine, from your face you have had a pleasant day—are you of a mind to forsake us, and take up with a wandering, diversified artist-life?"

"Oh, no, no!" cried she. "It is pleasant for a day, but I should not thrive long in Italian air. For all my roots are at Bently;" and she blushed with a shy happy glance at her Cousin Rous.

That sweet thought and tender look notwithstanding, Katherine was very cross with her Cousin Rous before she slept. Thus it befell. When next she was in private with Madame she began to tell her how she felt as if she had lived a month since the morning.

"Was the time then so long?" Madame asked.

"No, it was neither long nor tedious. What was like a dream before, has become real and solid, that is all. Until to-day it seemed so strange—and yet not strange, if you can understand. I had a feeling as if I had fancied everything and made a night-mare of it, and that presently I should wake up and find myself safe in the old school-room at home. But now I know that it really is, and that it never will vanish any more!"

Madame professed to understand these paradoxical states of mind. Her interest in Katherine's affairs was, however, of too precise a nature to be satisfied with fancies, and she persuaded her young comrade to enlarge on her experiences instead.

"What shall I tell you? What would you like to hear? You have seen my father—oh, Maddie, how hard it is to say! The chief thing is the work—it is a necessity, but they are all so happy and gay together——"

"Yes, yes—those who must work to live have no anxiety if work is plentiful. It was my daily prayer, when I had to teach, that I might never be left without pupils—Go on, my dear." "You have seen them all, so I need not try to describe their looks. The Signora (that shall be our name for her) is very sweet. I don't think she is accomplished, but she speaks French, and we got on fluently. I could live with her; she is so calm and reasonable, and so affectionate. My little sisters are perfect pets. The Signora spoke of having me at Ravenna for a little while—Ravenna is their home. They will be returning there within a few weeks."

"Ravenna is a dreary, unhealthy city—If you go before May is out that will be the time of Colonel Eliot's arrival," mused Madame, quite unintentionally betraying Rous Eliot's secret counsels.

Katherine was silent for a surprised and angry moment.

"Is Colonel Eliot coming home?" she said.

Madame looked up astonished.

"Did you not know? There is no reason why you should not. Yes, he is coming home—we were all talking of it this morning—by-the-by, you were gone out! The Squire has written to him at Aden, to tell him we shall be in Venice at such a date. He will ship to Trieste instead of Marseilles, and will cross over and join us there."

Katherine thought: That was Rous's secret at Verona—She said: "It is ever so many years since

I have seen Colonel Eliot—Uncle Henry, as we called him. I used to be afraid of him, with his knitted brows and harsh voice."

"My lord is exceedingly like his father in many ways," replied Madame. "At the same age, he will be his exact image."

"Oh, Maddie, Cousin Rous has a much kinder nature! Uncle Henry was so satirical—poor mamma was as shy of him as I was. He did not like either of us. He called me 'the little interloper'—don't you remember?"

Madame made light of this: "Yes, I remember, but it was only in play; because you had put out your Cousin Rous from being the heir. A great man does not dislike a little child."

"I am half afraid of him still. Why is he coming home so suddenly? He will ask me again, as he used to ask, where I get my dark hair from, and my hazel eyes and complexion without roses."

"Then tell him boldly! But your complexion is not without roses—you blush too often to please me; your colour comes and goes, a sign you are not so strong as you were. My dear Kate, you must not raise phantoms, or you will learn to believe them real, and to act as though they were. My lord was wise to say nothing to you of Colonel Eliot's coming—you are going to weave some new

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fantastic fears about that! Pray, don't meet Colonel Eliot with a downcast, ashamed face!"

"No, that will I not!" cried Kate with spirit.
"My father's life is worthy—and Cousin Rous loves me, I know."

"Of course, he does! And when he loves you, what harm can any one do you? Have more trust! I tremble when I see you flush and pale, and your dear eyes fill with foolish tears. I ask myself—What is there now to cry about?"

Katherine stood for some minutes without answering, her face turned aside. Then she said: "There is nothing that crying will alter, Maddie, and that's true! I am not unhappy. I have very much to be grateful and thankful for in the way events have fallen out. I ought to rejoice with a great joy—and I do rejoice. But there returns upon me again now that feeling of belonging to nobody, of being first with nobody, that I had at the beginning of our troubles. I have got over the humiliation and the anger, but the solitariness haunts me often still."

"I think you are very naughty and faithless—what would my lord say to such a confession?" asked Madame. "You do not trust him—you are not half so good to him as you ought to be."

Katherine sighed heavily: "Oh, Maddie! How I



wish these worries were nothing more than ghosts," she broke out.

"Wishing will not help you," said Madame calmly. "My experience is that the burden is increased when the bruised heart cries out against its cross. Submission, dear, submission and constancy alone can lighten it."

Katherine heard as one who hears not. She was in a mood of revolt. Why had not her Cousin Rous told her of his father's coming home? What did his concealment mean? Madame offered her no conjectural explanation—she had justified him once already.

In the morning Katherine asked him herself. "Rous, Maddie says that Uncle Henry is coming home—perhaps coming to meet us at Venice. If you knew, why did you not tell me? Was that what you were so mysterious about at Verona?"

"Sweetheart," replied Rous, "I have a thousand things to say to you, but nothing of my father. What I was mysterious about at Verona it is not yet convenient to reveal. Kate must allow me the exercise of a little discretion, and trust me all the same, that I mean nothing but kindness to her."

Rous Eliot's colour had risen rather warmly in his face at Katherine's air of making a charge against him, and it was reflected upon hers in a tint of con-



fusion. She felt ashamed. The tears rushed to her eyes, and she hastily offered amends: "Dear Rous, forgive me—I meant no distrust——" And Rous instantly and generously forgave her.

"I suppose," said Madame, seeing her shortly after, "my lord has satisfied you?"

"Yes," said Katherine, "he has satisfied me. I must rely on Rous for all or nothing. He is very good, and I am very wilful, fretful and fearful. I don't deserve that he should love me as he does!"

"If you are sensible of that, dear Kate, try to be more worthy of his love, and don't tease him with suspense," began Madame, anxious to give some of the warnings of experience. But Katherine was already out of hearing.

## XIV.

## Past and Future.

The dinner at the "Golden Eagle" passed off agreeably. Katherine and Rous took away the children after dessert, and enriched them with more toys and playthings at the stalls in the piazza than were convenient to carry home. The Signora and Madame had a confidential outpouring on the balcony of Madame's room, the chief theme of which was Katherine, though many traits were incidentally revealed concerning Monna and Nina and Luigi, and concerning their father also. When people are interested in those they talk of, they find a world to say that would be too trivial to report.

It was between Mr. Eliot and Mr. Fenwick that the communications most important to this history were exchanged. The Squire did not waste time or words, but as soon as they were alone, began on a matter that lay very near his conscience—namely, the provision he had made for Katherine in the event of his death.

He said: "I have provided for Katherine as liberally as I could have done for a daughter of my own

had I been so happy as to have a son besides. The land I cannot meddle with; it is entailed, and my brother is my successor, and Rous his heir. Rous and Katherine are true lovers, I hope and believe; but, as men of the world, we know that lovers break faith sometimes; therefore I have made her quite free and independent of Bently."

John Fenwick did not speak of gratitude or protest too much. Katherine had been bred in a luxury to which he was all unused, which he could not afford her. He had enough to do to provide for the little birds in his nest. His heart was all there, and he was fully sensible of the benefit of having this daughter, who must necessarily be always more of a stranger than the rest, sufficiently endowed without any fortune from him.

When this essential point was disposed of another had to be considered. John Fenwick declared that it was right, and that it was also his desire, Katherine should make intimate acquaintance with those who, belonging to him, were closely allied to her in blood. To this the Squire consented without demur; and it was agreed that, Katherine herself being willing, she should go to Ravenna with her father and his family when his work was finished at Padua. The length of her stay there was to be determined by circumstances. And meanwhile she

was to go to Venice with her present friends—and soon, not to lose the season of delicious cool and freshness that prevail there in the month of May.

It always happened, with the Squire, as with Katherine, that any incident which revived his great affliction depressed his spirits. The next and following days he had frequent fits of irritability, succeeded by intervals of tedium, when he was perplexing to be with. Rous and Katherine exerted themselves to amuse him; took him to the market, always a scene of cheerful noise and bustle in an Italian city; to the piazza, where the notabilities of Padua stand in marble round a shadowless garden, but all to no purpose. He would neither be interested nor amused. The only remark he made was that his contemporaries had described Giotto as an ugly little fellow. and there he was, as tall and beautiful as any-as his friend Dante, for instance, whose company, he begged leave to say, was no good to him. The Squire was supposed to have taken offence at the devil, in the great fresco of the Last Judgment at the Chapel of the Arena.

One morning at breakfast he startled everybody by saying with a vast groan: "Padua is a tiresome place. For my part, now that our task is done, I care not how soon we go home—only I suppose we must await the Colonel's arrival?" "Yes," said Rous, "we must certainly await that, having required him to come out of his way to meet us. But we might go on to Venice at once—that would be change. You will enjoy re-visiting Venice, sir? On the whole, your health seems to benefit by our tour?"

The Squire was not very lively in his acquiescence. As for his health, he was uncertain, and soon tired—he believed he was feeling that injury to his leg again. Madame in her wisdom was distressed, and would have accelerated Colonel Eliot's coming and the departure for England had she been able. But nobody could do anything at the moment except wait, and take such diversion as offered to pass the time.

They remained in Padua over the Sunday, and dined with Mr. Danvers that day, to meet Mr. Fenwick and the Signora. It was in the garden afterwards that the artist drew Katherine apart from the others, and gave her a sketch of her poor young mother's history, and of his own career, early and later, at home and in Italy. Kate had much withed to hear, but had not liked to ask in the presence of the Signora, lest the recital should be a pain and embarrassment. This was the last opportunity they were likely to have before they bade good-bye.

His mother, John Fenwick said, was always a

widow in his memory. Katherine knew her gloomy abode in College Lane. She was poor, and eked out a living by silk embroidery, which she worked at in the downstairs parlour, where it was never quite daylight; for it looked into an angle of court where a close-knit tapestry of ivy clothed the walls. In appearance she was a graceful little woman, with lovely eyes and soft lips for a kiss—that was his recollection of her. She gave him his own way in the choice of a profession, and though art had not led to fame and fortune, as he fondly anticipated, he had never regretted adopting it. To his knowledge he had seriously grieved her only once. His marriage was a real vexation to her—a cause, indeed, of their temporary estrangement.

"She never saw Kitty, pretty blossom that she was, but she conceived a prejudice against her," he explained. "She thought her a deep designing character—in fact, she was a perfect child. We had not six-and-thirty years between us, and scarcely so many pence. Our life together was short and not merry. It is like a dream to look back upon, and it lasted scarcely longer than a dream. We had hardly begun to feel the pinch of our folly when she was gone and I was free again, with you on my hands. I don't like to remember that time. I hope I was good to her, I know I loved her; and yet I

had brought her into straits of which, until she knew me, she knew nothing."

Katherine said it was very pitiful—had she no parents, had they no friends to help them?

"She had no parents, and the friends of neither of us were in a rich way. Besides we made no appeal. Our sorrows were scarcely begun before they were ended. I took her from a charitable lady to whom she filled the office of spaniel, and was loving and grateful for much rough usage. I saw it and pitied her, and so we fell in love."

"And she was happier with you however you were straitened," averred Katherine warmly.

"She often told me so, and I was glad to believe it. I have a letter that she left behind her, written in view of her death—you shall read it some day. You have her voice and many of her pretty ways, but you are more like my mother in the face. Look at my mother's portrait when you come to Ravenna, and you will see what you will be like when you are sixty."

Here John Fenwick paused with a sigh, and fell into a reverie. After the lapse of a few minutes he woke up again with the exclamation that old reminiscences make a man melancholy.

He went home to Eversley after his poor young rife's death, but his mother still cherished her dis-

pleasure, and he took the resolution of coming abroad. Italy was very captivating to him, young and an artist. He heard at Verona that his child was dead. The climate, the scenery, the people were all to his liking. He stayed on from year to year, working and faring hard. His mother wrote at intervals and briefly; as briefly he answered her. He was sorry now, thinking that with a little timely conciliation on his part they might have been friends, and have forgiven one another sooner. It was after four years of absence that he heard from an old neighbour-from Dr. Rolandi, in fact, of her failing health. Then he went back to Eversley, and for a winter, a spring, and a summer they were together. During that time he painted the portrait that Katherine resembled. Mrs. Fenwick never ceased to sit at her embroidery frame, and died quite suddenly at last.

"How well I remember all the circumstances," said her son, recalling them with visible emotion. "You have seen our old home, Kate, and know what it is like—The window was open into the court, the door was open into the passage—the front door also was open. There was the flitter and chirp of sparrows in the dusty ivy, and the echo of footsteps in the street. The August morning was very sultry—I had been out and had come

in again. The sun glared on the white pavement of the Minster yard, and not a leaf of the elms that stood about it stirred. I was thinking how I would go upstairs to my work, when my mother began to say: 'I hope we are friends, John-life is not long enough for long quarrels.' I told her that, of course, we were friends. She was going on to add: 'I am glad to hear you say that because I know that soon I must leave you-' when a change passed over her face, her voice grew inarticulate. and in less than an hour she was dead. When I had buried her I came back to Italy, and I have not been in England since. I have mated again, and made my nest at Ravenna, and unless it be to please you, Kate, I never care to see the old home any more."

"Ah! but to please me you must, and you must see Bently," pleaded Kate, and dried her eyes at the thought of the dear place. John Fenwick's recital was finished, and he was not inclined to talk any more. The Signora, who had watched him, well knowing what was being told, drew near and suggested that the evening was advanced, and the children would be wearying for their beds.

"I am ready. Let us go," said the artist rising and shaking off his dolour. "Good-bye, Katherine, we shall meet again at Ravenna." With the departure of Mr. Fenwick and his wife, the party broke up. Between Mr. Danvers and the Squire there were many last words, but finally everybody went away, and the exile was left in solitary possession of his garden. The old man walked about it for some time after his guests were gone, recalling their faces, their voices, and thinking how like shadows across a mirror were visitors from England across his life. They came and went, and left no trace. They peopled it for a day, then left it blank of their friendly company, perhaps, for ever.

## XV.

# In Venice-One Day.

"Now is Kate my own again! There have been so many people to claim her lately that I have felt as though I had lost her," said the Squire in a voice of relief and self-gratulation.

They were seated opposite to each other in the train on the road to Venice. Katherine held out her hand as glad as himself.

"Don't say you have lost me—I am yours till death us do part!" answered she, and they were a foolish, affectionate, fond father and daughter for ten minutes after, crying, kissing, caressing in utter indifference to the witnesses—or rather in a perfect assurance of their sympathy. Only Madame Roussel and Rous were in the carriage besides themselves.

It was evening. They had lingered at the "Golden Eagle" through the heat of the afternoon. There had been delays, and Mr. Eliot had wanted one more conversation with Mr. Fenwick. Whatever it had been about he was not the less at peace for it; and now, as he said, Kate was his own again. To see him in cheerful good-humour exhilarated

the others. Katherine thought she would devote herself to him entirely for the week to come, and leave Rous to take care of Madame. She was not conscious of having neglected him, but when there are lovers in a company, they are so apt to forget everybody but themselves.

And presently, in pursuance of her good intentions, she was whispering to Rous: "I wonder why that nice old Mr. Danvers has settled at Padua."

"Because when he was a sensitive young man of my age a beautiful young woman jilted him, as somebody would jilt me if I did not take precautions," whispered Rous again.

Katherine's pretty mouth formed itself into a round O of astonished expostulation, and a staccato, low-toned debate ensued, in which third persons were not encouraged to take part. They were as happy out of it. It is always fatiguing to talk in a railway-train.

It was already dusk at the Bridge of the Brenta, and dark as the train swept over the salt-marshes and reclaimed lands by Dolo and Mestre—dark and showery; but the sky was clear above Venice, and a few stars shone out as they passed through the station to the nearest landing-place on the Grand Canal. No noise of wheels, no clamour of voices; a few men moving about with lanterns, to show the

traveller's feet their way into the gondolas, lest a false step should plunge them into the black water.

"Well, Kate, what are your first impressions of Venice?" says the Squire, as their gondola cleft its smooth way along, the steel prow gleaming in the lantern-light, and the red-shirt of the gondolier in front catching a glow.

"That there are more chances of being drowned than in London streets."

"And not less of being run over," added Rous, as a boat, carrying no light, shot out of the shadow of the houses directly across their path.

As it was a fine night there was no hood or awning to their gondola, and they could look about, behind, before, on either side, and could see the stars shining deep down in the water. Only the roof-outline of the buildings was visible against the sky, and here and there the form of a balcony, betrayed by a lamp within the room, or the hall of some great house where a gondola was lying at the steps, awaiting a late guest, perhaps. At intervals the gondolier, to inform the strangers, sang out the name of a palace or a church, but no name that struck the ear as familiar until they came in sight of a vast, dim arch spanning the canal, which was the "Rialto," that famous bridge where in Shylock's day the merchants of Venice congregated. They

did not pass under it, but turned suddenly to the left, into a mouth dark as Erebus; and so went winding by the narrow water-ways of the city, the gondolier now giving, now answering, a loud warning cry as he approached a corner that he had to turn. Swifter gondolas, or lighter laden, glided past in silence; others were moored for the night within the stout posts which make a harbour of safety at each palace gate. All the rest of the city might have been asleep, but for a drift of distant music, which the Squire said came from the Piazza of St. Mark, where the Venetians take their pleasure on fine summer nights.

They heard it nearer by and by, when they emerged from the gloomy canal between the old Ducal Palace and prisons. Passing below the Bridge of Sighs which forms a double covered road connecting the two buildings, they emerged upon the broad lagune that skirts the Mole. Here barges for the river-traffic and tall sea-going ships lay at anchor to load and unload, and a few waifs from the crowd on the piazza were pacing the broad pavement, or smoking and gossiping in the cool open air in front of the cafés. Here there was life and stir, and noise enough.

Mr. Eliot had wisely, on Mr. Fenwick's recommendation, written to bespeak rooms at the "Fair Katherine's Trial. Shore," a small hotel on the Mole, where people who are not altogether devoted to gondolas can get exercise for their legs; and in fact, make a complete tour of Venice without ever setting foot on water. When they reached their sitting-room, three stories high, Katherine went straight out upon the balcony, to see what she could see. Not much—a yellow haze to the right, whence the music sounded, which was from the lamps on the piazzetta; a hueless domed mass opposite, which was the church of St. Giorgio; a soft clearness of sea and atmosphere in the west; and below, masts, moving figures, and a rumour of feet and voices. It was very different in the morning—very bright, very shrill, all in lively commotion.

"Where am I?" was Katherine's first thought at waking. She opened her eyes. Fine net curtains enclosed her, a sweet wind blew on her face. There was Madame undoing the shutters—the window was open already, open all night.

"How one sleeps when one is young!" said the old lady. "It is then one has a light heart and a clear conscience! One is all trouble to-day; to-morrow, pouf! and it is gone!"

"Pouf!" echoed Katherine, and laughed joyously.
"I am going to be happy in Venice; I know I am,
I feel it in the air!"

"That is right, my dear. Be good, be happy. When one is travelling it is so easy to take the cream off one's pleasure."

"You don't mean me, Maddie?" said Kate in a tone of injured remonstrance.

"Be a discreet child, and get up—the sun has been up three hours," rejoined Madame evading the question.

"Ah! if we were travelling only for pleasure, I know who would never be dull and melancholy," sighed Kate, excusing and accusing herself in the same breath. "But I think the worst is over now, and I shall not have that cold chill of apprehension to check every impulse of gaiety. We are in Venice—when we were at home we were in a better place, but I'll try to enjoy it—with the help of somebody."

"I hope you will, indeed! You are very cool! Think of what it costs, and how much cleverer you ought to go away than you have come."

"Dear Maddie, I will. Cousin Rous and I have agreed to get 'Murray' by heart between us."

"My lord is very well in his proper place; I have not a word to say against him there—but I never did like him in the school-room," rejoined Madame drily. "There is his voice in the next room, and you a full hour off being ready for

breakfast! Dear Kate, you must turn over a new leaf in this matter of getting up. I shall leave you now, for I only make you longer."

Kate looked as modest and rosy as a daisy in the dew when she made her late appearance.

"At last! We were just threatening not to wait for you another minute," cried Rous.

"Good morning, Miss," said the Squire as she endowed him with a cool kiss.

Madame wore an air of being herself rebuked.

"I had not the heart to wake her earlier, she was sleeping so sweetly," whispered the dear judicious old lady, and Katherine received the nod of absolution. Breakfast at half-past eight was the Squire's law, and no one who loved him made light of it. It was past nine now.

"We have settled the day's work already, Kate—listen," said Mr. Eliot, and Kate lent him her ears. "To begin with, your Cousin Rous will take you to the top of the Campanile of St. Mark; there you will gain an idea of the extent of the city and of its situation. It is a splendid clear morning for the distant view, and I advise you to lose no time. Then you are to take a gondola, and go to the post for letters, and return. After lunch, I suppose you will have some writing to do, and as you adore sleep, we will allow you to take your siesta. The

table-d'hôte is at six. And this evening there is a serenata on the Grand Canal. That will be beautiful—you shall go if you are good. Now, be off."

The young people did not stay for twice bidding. They went out in gay good-humour, fully purposed to be happy, and also observant of everything they ought to see. But Rous, as usual, forgot "Murray," and left it behind him; and when they reached the piazzetta, and stood to gaze at the famous Red Columns where the Lion of St. Mark, and St. Theodore and his crocodile are mounted aloft to keep watch over the lagune, they admired the crocodile for a dragon with folded wings; and called it so to Madame afterwards, who convicted Rous on the spot of his delinquency, and in her own private mind felt assured that the incorrigible young man really forgot "Murray" on purpose.

They contrived, however, to find their way to the Campanile without that estimable guide; loitering considerably, and betraying themselves for inquisitive English folk quite as surely as if Rous had carried that familiar red volume under his arm. One after another the cicerones who haunt the piazza and precincts of St. Mark bowed to him, and offered their services, and retreated, bowing again, at his curt "No, thank you!"

"They are such a bore, Kate; we shall do much

better by ourselves," said he, and Kate was of course of his opinion—she could look about her far more if she was not obliged to listen as well. "Besides," added Rous, "the fellows show up one's ignorance. They talk French and Italian, and who is to understand 'em? They would be gabbling at one of your precious little ears while I was translating at the other, till you would end by sitting down in sulky bewilderment and despair. I'll be your cicerone, Kate, and take you everywhere."

Kate laughed demurely—it was Rous who was shy of French and Italian talk; it was Rous the gaps in whose historical information were so fearful; Kate, thanks to Madame, was a fountain of useful knowledge; but, thanks to Madame again, not liable to spout and overflow continually.

Rous waved his hand towards the Ducal Palace and began, in prompt performance of his function: "That was the palace of the dukes of Venice in the days of the republic—it is a museum of art and archæology now and a library. We won't go in today. That, again, is the church of St. Mark—we will hear a mass next Sunday, the Squire permitting. These are the sacred doves—we must see them fed at noon. What a few people there are about! Doesn't the piazza look deserted? How vast it is! Across there, opposite, is the Clock Tower,

and under it the entrance to the Merceria, whither I must conduct you to buy a shady hat, not wishing to see you burnt as brown as a berry."

"When did you get up your topography, Cousin Rous?" asks the young lady.

"Last night, an' please you, Cousin Kate; when your fair serenity was lapt in downy slumber. This is the Campanile. Here is the door—here we go up. I lead. Hark! that is the bell!"

The custodian emerged from a gloomy little den in the base of the tower, and gave them admittance. It was a very easy ascent by an inclined plane, winding square-wise inside the hollow shaft. They had many peeps by the way on a level with the first-floor windows of the houses, with the parapets of the roofs, with the grotesque chimney-tops, with the domes of churches, until they issued forth on the leads of the belfry far above them all, and gazed away to the mountains beyond Padua, and the snowy Alps of Styria, crystal white and clear against the pale blue sky.

Katherine's enthusiasm was of the quiet sort. She was impressed, and had not a word to say. The wind blew high and the sun shone bright. It was almost cold at that elevation. There spread the rippled, glittering sea beyond the Lido, and on

the hither side of the low sandy shore went the boats, deep-ladened, sails set, steering slowly through the channels of the lagune, marked by huge stakes driven into the mud. There stretched the green plain towards Mestre, and beyond it, only beautiful with the mystery of remoteness, and a tremulous haze of heat. There lay the islands on the sea—Torcello, Murano, and St. Cristoforo, where Venice buries her dead. There rose the grim walls of the arsenal, and there the old forts of the republic, still guarding the strait that is the gateway of the lagunes from the Adriatic.

The watchman struck the great bell—Boom! it sounded clear and deep in the air.

The houses of the city stand so thick, the canals are so narrow and circuitous that from the height where Rous and Katherine stood none of the water-ways were to be seen—only dark-tiled roofs innumerable, and chimneys all narrow at the base, and expanding like a flower-pot at the top, as if the ingenuity of old Venetian architects, in conflict with boisterous winds, had settled unanimously on this quaint form as the best form to circumvent the domestic misery of smoke. Out of this maze of roofs rose steeples and towers, domes and brazen crosses, winged figures of angels and patron saints,

The watchman struck the great bell again. Boom! Every quarter of an hour he strikes it.

"How pretty it is to see the doves and their shadows flying after over the empty piazza," said Katherine dreamily.

Rous continued to decipher the labyrinth of the city, discovered the Scala Minelli, and guessed at the churches. The men and women on the Mole were diminished to pigmies; so were the groups of idlers round the doors of the cafés; and so were the stone-cutters at work on the parapet of the ducal palace, and about the porches of St. Mark's.

"There are gardens in Venice," said Katherine again. "How lovely those light acacias are over that wall, and those scarlet flowers in that window-sill! A garret window, Rous—and there's a bird-cage too."

"So there is! What eyes you have for those little things, Kate! What do they tell you?"

"Stories of other people's lives to-day. The great buildings are history."

"That is true. But look down below—there are the Red Columns; between those columns was the place of execution. The watchman up here must have seen strange sights. Let us ask him what is his duty now?"

To strike the bell, and keep a look-out for fires.

Day and night, he and another watchman besides keep watch—he answered, and turned to strike the bell again.

"We must go, the next stroke will be noon; we loitered in coming," said Rous.

"I hope nobody is growing impatient for letters. We ought to find a large collection here—I have had none yet," responded Katherine.

The descent was accomplished at a run, and just as they reached the outlet into the piazza, the doves were arriving from all points of the compass. Some perched on the cornices of the arcades, to await the sound of twelve o'clock; others dropt at once on the pavement about the children who fed them. Two or three flew to meet our lovers, and Kate promised them a roll in her pocket next day. They were very plump doves, pigeons rather, evidently not dependent on the casual bounty of the public; and to the minute came on the scene two servants of theirs, men in blue linen raiment, wheeling covered barrows, round which the whole flock swiftly assembled. Shovelfuls of broken polenta were thrown to them, and when they had consumed the substance, their servants swept up the fragments, and away they flew to their familiar haunts-to visit windows where they were welcome, and vine-arbours and gardens a span large upon

the roofs, where they had friends, and were the guests of solitary, quiet people—or so Katherine was pleased to fancy.

The mid-day sun had immense power, and having gained the shelter of the arcades, Rous proposed that they should walk under them as far as they could on the way to the post. They took notice as they passed of Salviati's glass-shop, of Naya's photographs, and at Munster's library they went in to buy note-paper, and to ask for The Stones of Venice. They got the first and second volumes, but the third never, so long as they stayed in the city. Then they continued through a narrow street bordered on either side by shops, until they reached an open space in front of the Church of St. Moïse, where there was a canal, and a bridge, and a landing-stair, at the foot of which a gondola was lying for hire. It was a pretty gondola with a red and white striped awning, and a gondolier in white with a red scarf round his waist. Rous hired him for an hour, and in a few minutes he brought them to the side-entrance of the Post-Office. Kate sat still, and Rous went in, and came out again presently with a handful of letters.

The majority were for the Squire; there was one for Madame, Rous had his share, and Katherine had two—one from Bently, and one from Miss

Buxton. She blushed as she accepted them: they were addressed to her as "Miss Fenwick"—the first time she had seen her name written. Rous was, or seemed, inobservant, and busy with his own letters; but when the gondola shot out into the Grand Canal, he thrust them into his pocket, and inquired in a sympathetic voice who were Kate's correspondents.

"This is from poor mamma," said she, in a tone that betrayed tears.

"I daresay she is very comfortable. Joyce always says, 'Don't be sorry for the mistress: she is better alone and quiet.'"

"Yes. I don't think she cares that we are all away."

The gondolier looked round for instructions. "To the Rialto—then home to the 'Bella Riva,'" said Rous. And deliciously they went gliding, silent, thoughtful, their reverie only disturbed by the conscientious announcements of the gondolier.

"Palazzo Grimani!—Palazzo Loredan!—Palazzo Mocenigo, where your great warrior, Lord Byron, lived!—Palazzo Bembo!" When they were come to the Rialto, he made them observe that a vine was growing luxuriantly out of the very arch of it; he said that it bore fruit, and was much regarded by the people.

"A sign there is life in the old stones yet—a good augury for Venice," said Kate, and the gondolier nodded acquiescence.

They were close by the market, but it was too late in the day to see it: early in the morning when the country boats are bringing in their loads of fruit and vegetables, of fish, flesh and fowl, is the hour. So they turned and rowed back,—past more decayed palaces of the old Venetian nobles—of the Giustiniani, Pisani, Balbi, Contarini, Morosini; past the white church of Our Lady of Salvation, past the royal gardens to the stairs of the Piazzetta, whence they walked to their hotel along the bustling Mole, pestered by little boys who sold matches and girls who offered rose-buds.

Madame was too much interested in the letter they brought her from her son to put them, at the moment, through an examination as to how they had improved the time since they went out. But it was only a duty and, a pleasure deferred.

The ladies retired to their rooms for the afternoon—they had two small rooms opening the one into the other—and were immersed in blottingbooks and siesta until the warning bell rang for the table-d'hôte. Mr. Eliot had received a heavy despatch, and looked harassed over it. His nephew

asked if he could render him any assistance, and was dismissed with an abrupt denial. He went off to view the Arsenal, and the Squire shut himself up with his troubles. There was a letter from his wife that hurt him. And there had arrived from Mr. Morgan a draft of that will that he had commanded, on receiving at Verona Colonel Eliot's letter adverse to the marriage of Rous and Katherine -accompanied by a sort of suggested remonstrance on the part of the sender. He read it with agitation. It was certainly unjust to Rous, and he could not be sure that it was a fair measure of precaution for Katherine. He balanced the matter long. Once he could have leant on his own sound, honourable judgment. Now he needed a counsellor. But he had no one within reach whom he could consult. If his old rector were at hand—but he had missed him throughout his trials. Or if he could talk to his friend Jacques. Finally, he reflected that the necessity for a decision was not immediate. He could keep the draft by him, and cancel or executeit later. The bell rang for dinner just as he had committed the document to the safe custody of his despatch-box. He went to the meal jaded and without appetite. Madame saw this and was sorry. But the lovers saw only each other. These were golden days for them!

The Squire would not go to the Serenata in the evening, and Madame was afraid of the night air; so the two young people had their gondola to themselves. It was a soft, dark twilight, without moon or stars, but to the watchers on the balcony the scene was the prettier for the gloom. Far out, at the mouth of the Grand Canal, lay the musician's barge, decorated with green boughs, its rows of coloured lamps glowing like fireflies amongst the foliage. As it began to move the echoes of a favourite song to Santa Lucia were borne upon the wind; and from every landing-stair and every tributary canal glided forth the gondolas, all illuminated with gaudy paper lanterns, and took their places to form a procession. There was some pushing to be foremost, and a collision occasionally amongst the gondoliers, but all in good humour; though as the steel prows, ranged in order, rose and fell with the motion of the oars, they had an aspect of menace, as of war-horses prancing. The music took up a martial strain to increase the illusion.

"We are going out to meet the Genoese!" exclaimed a girl in the gondola next to Rous and Katherine—an English girl with shy bright eyes that looked at you suddenly, and looked away. She was wrapt up in a blue and white cloud, and her companion was a silver-haired lady in a scarlet hood.

The flickering, floating globes gave light enough to betray all faces, and those shy bright eyes under the cloud, though their glances were so swift, would know the lovers again; and Katherine would know them.

The procession was slow, in time to the music, but not too slow for the strangers, enchanted with the romance of a water-pageant. The canal was illuminated at its most picturesque points, and when they came in sight of the Rialto it was all shining with pale fire. The leading gondolas pulled hard for the best places under the bridge to hear the concert. Some of the paper lanterns blazed up and perished in the race; but without striving, the gondoliers in charge of the lovers carried them into a safe haven, sheltered from the wind by a huge barge. This barge seemed in the way at first, but it played a useful part in the entertainment later; serving as a stage for chorus-singers, echo-makers and declaimers of satirical recitative. Before the music was over many of the gondolas had glided away, many more had lost their lights, and it was with diminished splendour the procession returned down the canal. The lamps were out by the way, and when Rous and Katherine landed on the Mole it was quite silent and deserted.

"It is dull after the show!" said Rous.

Kate had felt so happy while it lasted that she could have wished it to go on for ever. But they were at the door of the "Bella Riva," and it was high time to say good-night.

## XVI.

## Golden Hours.

THE bells of Venice are many and they are early; the bells of St. Zaccaria, behind the "Bella Riva," are very early. They improved Katherine in the matter of rising betimes, and when they had awakened her once, they awakened her always. She learnt to love the clear still shining of sea and sky before the toil and heat of the day began. emulated her, and morning after morning they forestalled Madame. From the Campanile they saw a splendid sunrise, and afterwards rowed to the Rialto to watch the market-boats come in; and there they beheld and admired Venetians of the old bronze. as like as brothers to the blue-jackets of England. Then they walked about the market, and gazed at the marvellous draught of fishes, the queerest fish for food that ever the sea gave up. Katherine brought home to breakfast a basket of fragrant strawberries, and a posy of ranunculuses of the richest dyes-crimson and purple and rose, scarlet and amber, and set them in a vase in the midst of the table. "Things pleasant to the eye."

The Squire followed her movements with a wistful fondness, and when she came in her loving way, and laid her fresh cheek against his, he said: "My darling, ask me to go out with you sometimes, and send that selfish lover of yours about his business."

"Come with us to Torcello to-day, sir?" proposed Rous, unabashed. "The weather is perfect."

That was decided. Madame ventured to hope that the young people did not forget there were pictures in Venice—Titians, Tintorettos, Bellinis. They seemed to her to live upon the water.

"There is plenty of time—let them enjoy the cool fine days out of doors," said the Squire. "There will come rain or heat by-and-by, when they will be glad of the shelter of a roof." Those precious young people were, in fact, to please themselves always: to do whatever they liked, and nobody was to contradict them.

"I suppose," said Madame to Kate, "it goes on?"

They were by themselves, preparing for that expedition to Torcello. "It?" echoed Kate interrogatively. "What?"

"The engagement between my lord and you?"

Kate had not confessed to Madame those significant passages in the cloisters of St. Antonio at Padua. Madame was allowed to understand that

all the former love, and more, still subsisted, but she had been forbidden to call in question Kate's magnanimity in granting to herself and her Cousin Rous a dispensation from their betrothal. And only on the supposition of its renewal could the discreet and excellent old lady properly explain the things she saw and heard. The lovers did not mind her in the least. Not to speak of those morning walks, she had surprised Kate sitting on Rous's knee, making him read out of the same book, and Kate only looked round, and said it was "Murray." She did make a feint of moving, but Rous said, "Sit still," and she was beautifully obedient. Then they would kiss at "Good-night," and "Good-morning"and even when there was no occasion, when they were leaning on the window-sill, feeding the pigeons. It was absurd, and Madame was justified in asking if "it went on."

"Yes, Maddie, dear, it does," Kate told her, and offered her the present of a kiss as seal to the avowal.

"Why did you not tell me before?".

"Could you not guess?"

"I thought it must be so; for you are quite yourself again, and so is my lord—as audacious as ever. You English lovers take a deal of liberty."

Kate gave a great sigh of content. "Yes, Maddie.

We have made up our minds, both of us, and we are not going to care for anybody. We belong first to each other—that is what Rous says."

"Oh, indeed! That is what Rous says? Is my bonnet quite straight, dear?"

"Quite. Do you like me in my new hat, Maddie? Rous chose it."

"It makes a very nice shade over your face, and that is becoming. And the straw trimming is simple and pretty."

"Yes. Rous has a charming taste in things to wear. Do you know, Maddie, I feel perfectly happy again, perfectly."

Mr. Eliot hired a gondola with two rowers for the day. It is a long pull to Torcello, and they were to see Murano and the glass-blowing, famous in Venice of old, first. Madame was well pleased that Katherine should be amused, but, as her conscientious governess, not long retired from service, she was resolved that she should also be instructed.

"Learning, my dear, is light to carry," said she, and produced "Murray," laying it conspicuously on her lap.

It was an exquisite morning. The tide was high, and the sea danced and sparkled in the sun and breeze. The Alps were clear of clouds, and the

sky was deeply, serenely blue. The fresh wind brought a colour into the Squire's face, and he looked almost as well as on a fine hunting morning at home. It was somebody's cheerful notice of this that set them all off talking about Bently. And talking of Bently led Mr. Eliot again into expressing his desire for a speedy return. He longed for it more than the young people knew. He thought constantly of his poor wife, left to herself. They had spent a long life together, founded at the beginning on a deep and passionate love. Neither had a nearer friend than the other. He remembered—he felt that what was left of this life, even in its bitterness, satisfied his soul more than any life away from her. It had needed absence to show him this-absence had done its work, and variety of scene had become monotony of toil. He was weary of changes, and looked impatiently forward to rest. He fell, at length, into a silence, and sat beating softly with one hand upon his knee. Only Madame observed him, and was ·sorry.

It was intensely hot at Murano. The sun blazed with a fervent glow on the narrow causeway that runs below the houses on one side of the main canal. A boat scantily loaded with vegetables, another boat of the fine sea-weed used in packing glass, two long-legged, bare-footed lads steering an

empty boat—that was all the outward and visible stir of existence at Murano. A taciturn workman gave them admittance to Salviati's factory, and conducted them to the workshop through a gardenalley where a few scarlet runners and meagre flowers clothed the cindery borders. The furnace-fires were at a white heat, and the windows and doors wide open. Grape-vines grew about them, and the broad leaves played in the draught. The bare-armed men glanced, swart and red, at the strangers, twirling on their iron rods balls of liquid glass, spun them into vases, twisted their stems, curved their lips and set handles on them of divers colours.

They must needs, after the new revival, see the ancient work in Venice glass, and for that purpose they visited a quaint little museum, collected and presided over by the parish priest. Madame's taste was sufficiently trained to admire with discretion; but the young generation were hard to convince of the beauty of much that they were shown. In fact, they were glad to go back to the gondola, and the broad expanse of sunny waves, wrinkled by a sweet, refreshing breeze.

Another hour brought them to Torcello, and they began to ask one another why they had come. The way into the desolate city was up a water-lane between two reedy banks, where the bramble trailed

its spiny branches, and the coarse grasses shivered in the blue mist. The gondola crept up this narrow way, the oars stirring the grey mud, then under a steep bridge of a single arch, where the yellow stone-crop gilded the broken parapet. The view beyond was of the Campanile and the ruinous cathedral, of another bridge and a few poor dim houses. In the ragged fields on either side the remnant of the inhabitants were making hay.

The visitors landed amongst the wild grasses, and crossed the bridge, where some children beset them: boys that were wonderful for beauty, for the dusk glow of their plump cheeks, and the soft lustre of their large eyes. Such children are rare in kings' palaces. Here every little body was in rags, every little hand was stretched out to beg. They formed a guard to the strangers, and increasing in numbers as they went, pursued them vociferously. A fairskinned cherub, blue-eyed and auburn-haired, came with the rest, a vast straw hat on his head, and on his feet nothing. Katherine was fond of children. and if there had been goodies to buy at Torcello, she would have made a lavish distribution; but there was nothing to buy. Still they followed her, chattering, laughing, merry as larks - to Attila's stone chair, standing knee-deep in weeds; round the arcades of the ancient church that marks the

site of the first city of refuge built by the people who founded Venice; into the church, where obscene neglect has obliterated all but the form of beauty; into the rank churchyard, where the poor rude crosses stand every way, looking over a low wall and across a few lean fields to the sea. Madame discovered stone shutters to the unglazed windows, and, guided by a very aged and decrepit woman, made her way into many mouldering holes and corners, whither she would fain have dragged Katherine in quest of knowledge. But Rous had decoved her away, and had made a seat for them both on a haycock under a shady tree, where they were hidden except from the Squire, in drowsy possession of another haycock. The children, enriched with a few minute copper coins, had run away, quarrelling after the manner of little robbers dividing their spoil.

"Can Tadmor be more utterly desolate than Torcello?" said Rous, gazing straight before him, and seeing only a level expanse of green water beyond the rough slope of new-cut grass.

Katherine gazed too, but looking through a glamour of imagination, she saw island-gardens, set like jewels in the sea, and safts of ships, and pinnacles and towers, all gilded and burnished with a glory of light. "I am thinking of those lovely

children," she said. "The old painters had not far to seek for their baby saints and angels. It is the fine air that feeds them; they have only that and polenta."

"They will grow up into men such as those we saw at the market-quay, and may carry the name of Venice over the world again. There is a ship from Liverpool lying off the Mole since last night. When we go to India, Kate, we may go by Venice as the best route."

Katherine blushed and did not answer him. But it seemed that the Squire heard, for he asked rather sharply: "What is that you are saying about India?"

"That Venice will be the best route to India before long. Then, farewell to her romance, and welcome back her trade!"

"When her merchants were princes and her traders the honourable of the earth, had she no romance? What lives are fuller of story than the lives of the men who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in the deep waters? A crowd of masts and intricate rigging would be a picturesque addition to her beauty." The Squire spoke testily. He was vexed that the lovers were not quite open with him — but when are lovers quite open with anybody?

"Do you see any material advance since the withdrawal of the Austrians, sir?" Rous inquired peaceably.

"I see a very material advance. There are fewer beggars and loungers, and the people are altogether in better heart and better humour. Though they were worsted in that terrible last siege, they deserved to win. Nothing rejoices me more than to see that Venice will have a day again."

"The impression that I received at first of her ruin and extreme indigence is wearing off."

"The people were cruelly impoverished by that crushing defeat, and many of the great families can never retrieve their fortunes. But the mass of misery is being leavened by a gradual inflowing of work and money. When I was here last, the Austrians were in full possession. Their military bands played on the piazza in the evenings, and the people came to hear, but in very surly temper. One night, I remember, the soldiers sang in chorus between the instrumental pieces, and at the end of one song I forgot myself, and applauded; but scowling faces and a bitter hiss quickly warned me to be silent."

"I would rather die than live under a hateful foreign yoke!" cried Katherine in a pretty fury.

"When nations fall under a foreign yoke they

have mostly qualified themselves to bear it," said the Squire. "Venice had enslaved herself by her vices before either French or Austrians laid their bonds upon her. But seed of the old race has been preserved, and she will regenerate herself in due time."

Madame's voice was heard calling: "Where are you, then?"

Rous sang out in answer: "Here, in the hay-field!" and the next minute she appeared, rebuke in her nice old face, and remonstrance on her tongue.

"I have been to the top of the campanile, and down into the crypt of the cathedral, and here are you, young people, half asleep on haycocks!"

"Not at all, Maddie, I assure you! We have been talking history, politics and philosophy. If you had been here you would have been edified," rejoined Kate, patting the haycock on the other side of her as an invitation to the indefatigable old lady to come and rest. Madame accepted it, and was thankful. Instantly Rous began to move.

"I don't know whether anybody else is aware of it, but I am reminded that I have had no luncheon to-day; and it is getting towards four o'clock," he observed, drawing forth his watch, and offering it for consultation to the company all round, The Squire was afraid that he would not meet with any luncheon at Torcello; but he had better hopes, and would start off to inquire of the gondoliers. He returned shortly with good news: bread and wine were to be had at a little inn by the water-lane, if they would come. They obeyed the summons with alacrity, and went to their gondola. It is odd how people forget that they are hungry until they are in sight of something to eat, and then how famished they feel!

It was not a very luxurious repast, but they would be lucky if they never got a worse in *India*, the Squire said, with a deprecating glance from his nephew to Katherine, as if to intimate that he was not deceived by their late dexterous evasion of his question. Kate laid her soft little hand on his arm, and whispered with a rosy face: "It was nonsense, papa; Rous only talks so."

"And Kate only listens. There! take a knot of bread, and stop your mouth," said the Squire, and stroked the little hand with a gesture infinitely sad. The lovers exchanged covert looks — had they grieved him, indeed?

The breeze had sunk, and there was a marvellous rich clearness in the atmosphere as they rowed back to Venice—a clearness of maize and lilac that flushed every blank wall and crumbling tower with a warmth of delicious colour, and painted their shadows in the water as vividly as their forms stood in the air. Rude, poor barges, with sails patched, orange and brown and red, and all the soil and stains of hard, laborious life, were reflected on the mirror of the sea as tranquil pictures; the fringed islands of verdure lay like oases of emerald in a mirage of opal, and the distant mountains were as sapphire.

"It is not poetry," Rous averred, "to say that on such an evening as this Venice is fair as a beautiful and pleasant dream."

As they approached the city, they passed amidst vessels loaded with stone and marble and bricks, amidst piles and rafts of wood lying in shoal water to season—materials of restoration, signs of the better day that was coming. Skirting the Arsenal they entered a gloomy canal where dredging was in progress; then out again upon the open sea, where the cordage of the great ships anchored off the Mole showed like delicate aerial tracery, and all the white domes and marble palaces, the proud columns and lofty bell-towers, the rugged homely roofs and wilful grotesqueries of ruin and decay were clothed alike with a splendour of vermilion, and azure and fine gold.

They landed at the Piazzetta stair, and were greeted by a loud, friendly voice. "Here you are, at last, good people. And this is the welcome you give a man from India!" It was Colonel Eliot, who was standing in the crowd.

## XVII.

## A Fair Excuse.

KATHERINE looked out of the window at a huge black and white steamer, blowing off its steam between the Mole and St. Giorgio.

"That is the ship that brought him!" mused she with heavy sighs.

She had seen Colonel Eliot for one moment, and had come away with Madame. They were both agitated, and in a hurry. The bell had rung for the table-d'hôte five minutes ago. Katherine's beauty was none the less for a little ruffling, but Madame must needs re-make her toilette, and as she was to wait for, she counselled Kate to do likewise.

Rippled, crisp dark hair, threaded with bright gold, is lovely without adorning; and when there is a straight white forehead under, with straight dark brows, and hazel eyes with the sea-light in them; when there is a blush rose on either oval cheek and a little melancholy mouth and round chin set on a fair round throat, a dress of primrose cambric suffices as well for a girl's arraying as the rich sheen

of silk attire. Katherine was, therefore, soon arrayed. It was her way when she was nervous to carry her head high and to move slowly, with an accession of dignity; and thus, with a slight tremour of the lip, but a composed and gentle air, she came presently into the sitting-room, where the gentlemen were already met.

"If we had thought of it, there was no necessity to dine at the table-d'hôte to-day," said the Squire. "Is Madame ready?"

Yes, there was Madame in black silk, fine lace and new gloves, greeting Colonel Eliot again like a most diplomatic old lady who will anticipate nothing but peace and amity in their mutual relations. As for Kate, the Squire took her hand under his arm, and marched her off without giving anybody the opportunity of disputing his possession. Rous brought up the rear, and sat with his father opposite to his sweetheart, at whom he looked with a gay assurance to rally her spirits. Colonel Eliot was looking at her too, from beneath a pair of shaggy, grey knitted brows, but his eyes were more inquisitive than disapproving. He was quite able to see through her slight veil of reserve, and to smile at the timid anxieties throbbing in her heart, Her loveliness and gentleness almost disarmed his prejudice, and he had the candour to confess to

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himself that if Rous had been premature in settling his love-affairs, he had, at any rate, a very fair excuse.

Whatever happens, men and women, with the means of dining, dine. The table was full from end to end, and almost every European nationality was represented, but the English-speaking races predominated. Colonel Eliot enjoyed the novelty and variety; he was a true citizen of the world, and had lived in many countries of it, Everybody contemplated critically everybody else within eve-shot. Some assailed their neighbours with conversation, some were responsive, some reserved. Rous Eliot encountered lower down the table the shy gazelle glances of the pretty girl he and Katherine had noticed at the Serenata. The Squire's neighbour was the lady of the scarlet hood, who wore an air of intelligence, as if she recognized a friend, though she claimed none. Next to Madame was an American, very genial and nasal. These two were soon-engaged in a learned disquisition on the fine arts. Colonel Eliot joined in it; and so did others. Came an interruption. In the full flow of talk a waiter presented over the American gentleman's shoulder a slip of paper-his bill. He counted down the money, drank a hasty glass of wine, bowed to Madame, bowed to the table, and rushed

off like a man going to sail with the tide. No one made an audible remark. No one knew whither he was travelling—coming from Jerusalem, perhaps, and going on to St. Petersburg, after the rapid manner of his nation. It is the fashion of this world: moving on, passing away. Time is up; one is called; he goes, and is seen no more. And another comes, as Colonel Eliot had come, a stranger, except in one small circle; where, like a stone dropt into a still pool, the eddies of his coming spread and widen indefinitely.

The gentlemen did not return upstairs after dinner. They went out, and Katherine and Madame sat alone in the balcony. It was a warm, cloudless evening, and the Mole was alive with the people at leisure after their day's work. The simple jugglers and musicians who amused them cheaply were there too-the man who played tricks with pigeons, and the woman who sang shrilly to a guitar. Many gondolas were on the water, and as the moon rose their numbers increased. Katherine did not see a hand waved to her from one of them; but her lover was there. Colonel Eliot would go out, and take his son with him, and presently the Squire returned by himself. He made an effort to be brisk and cheerful, and talked to Kate of the pleasure he had in his brother's arrival, but the

effort was too transparent to be successful. The others did not return until late at night, when the theatre was closed, when the cafes on the piazza were deserted, and the lights out. And this was the first eddy.

The next was that in the morning Colonel Eliot claimed his son all to himself again: "As we are in Venice, let us see Venice," said he; and he would not take the hint that Rous would like Katherine to be of their company.

So Katherine, the Squire and Madame went, a triangular party, to the Academy, and sat down before the Assumption of the Virgin, that grand altar-piece Titian painted for the Church of the Franciscans, who bartered it away when it was a little grimy for something newer, and gazed and gazed, but were not spiritualized by its masses of gorgeous colour. It was out of place - they would see it again, they said: a picture that by the world's consent is Titian's master-work must have a power in it. The scene that most moved Kate was a Crucifixion by Paul Veronese, also robbed from a church, where the Magdalen embraces the Cross, looking up to her dead Lord with eyes swimming in tears. Madame's chief delight was a Virgin and Child attended by several saints-St. Rosa, St. Catherine, graceful

figures, expressive faces, smoothly and elaborately painted.

"It is quite possible to have too much of pictures," said the Squire wearily when he had made the round of only two rooms. So his companions left him, resting opposite to a Holy Family where there is a little St. John girt with a lamb-skin, a back-view, most engaging. That bright-eyed English girl of the gondola occupied the same seat, admiring it enthusiastically, wishing to take his baby-saintship out of the picture, and have him for her very own. Her silver-haired chaperone joined her by and by, and the end of it was that they got into conversation with the Squire.

This conversation was interrupted by the hurried appearance of Colonel Eliot and his son. They had already made a tour of several galleries, churches and palaces—there are many ways of seeing Venice.

"Ah!" said the Colonel, pointing to a large canvas behind the Squire, "there is another Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple—the little figure in blue again. I prefer the first—there the figure stands out against the sky in natural proportion; here it is dwarfed by the bulk of the wall and the steps. Where was it we saw that other, Rous?"

Rous considered gravely for a minute and then laughed—he could not tell. They had been talking of various matters, and had seen so much since they set out that they could recollect nothing accurately. The strange lady was observed to smile with a pretty rose-colour in her cheeks. Colonel Eliot caught her eye, and recognized a very old friend. They shook hands cordially, and asked and answered a dozen questions in a breath. They had some rallying reminiscences in common, and did not fear to recite them.

"Your energy is as furious as ever! What a restless mortal you are! You arrived from India yesterday afternoon—by this time to-morrow you will have done all the sights of Venice!" said she.

"And you—are you so plaguily cool? When your difficulties overcome your powers of speech do you still make faces like a gurgoyle?"

The bright-eyed girl laughed: "Yes, Aunt Winnie makes faces like a gurgoyle often." By pure force of habit she did then. Her classical features transformed themselves with marvellous facility into a grotesque mask.

"And who is this?" said the Colonel, regarding with interest the shyly attractive young lady.

"My niece, Hetty Collingwood, my sister Sophie's third daughter. You remember Sophie?"

"Yes, yes. And you are Miss Dacres still! Let me introduce my son—Rous!"

But Rous had disappeared in search of Katherine. The Squire was made known to his brother's old friend instead. He had heard of Miss Dacres and her serene Greek beauty in days gone by-before his brother married the captivating wild Irish girl who was Rous's mother. A long and pleasant talk ensued, which exhilarated Colonel Eliot, and put him in high good-humour. It was not till Madame loitered by in her spectacles and alone, that they were reminded of the flight of time, and took a temporary leave, with the prospect of meeting again at dinner: "When I hope to have the pleasure of making known to you my boy," said the Colonel with a gallant bow, first to the gracious aunt, and then to the wistful niece. He took the Squire's arm and marched about with his head in the air.

"What a lovely woman Winnie Dacres is even yet!" said he, stroking his grizzled moustache as if flattered by her recollection. She might have returned the compliment and have said: "What a fine-looking man Henry Eliot is yet." For he was, indeed, a very fine-looking person, and had greatly the advantage of the Squire, notwithstanding his much harder life.

We are apt to talk as if beauty were the mo-

nopoly of youth. But the table-d'hôte at the "Fair Shore" that evening was a school for the study of handsome faces belonging to the elder generation. Unfortunately the lovers were not present to be instructed, and two of the handsome faces were very grave in consequence—Madame's to wit, and Colonel Eliot's. He had to apologize a second time to his old friend for his son's evasion. Even the Squire was perplexed to know what account they would be able to give of themselves when they returned to the surface of society. To be absent from dinner was an extraordinary transgression.

Madame suggested that they had perhaps gone to see the Grimani Missal in the Ducal Library, but everybody knew that seeing the Grimani Missal was the business of an hour, not of half a day. Grimani Missal, indeed! They were disporting themselves on the Lido—or, rather, they were now on their way back, in a burrasca of rough weather that was surely a judgment on them for the licence they had taken to inflict anxiety on their friends. Madame, though she made her pleas and excuses, was quietly secreting a lecture for her young lady all the time she was dining. Katherine had never been guilty of such a dereliction from propriety in her whole life before. Rous did wrong with his eyes open, in the bold masculine method, but not so Kate. She,

poor child, was an innocent example of how easy it is to fall away when a pleasant temptation entices. Thus it came about.

Colonel Eliot had bored his son inexpressibly that morning. Rous was sick of reasoning with him on the reasonableness of his love, and wanted a little peace and consolation when he happily met with Katherine at the Academy. She was pale and faint too, and they went out to seek some refreshment, which they found at a humble cafe for artists, close at hand. It is sad to state that such true lovers can be hungry, but they were; and Katherine, eating her bread and fruit, was so occupied that she did not see Madame and the two gentlemen crossing the open place to the landing-stair, and getting into their gondola. But Rous saw them, and wickedly let them go, that he might keep his dear companion to himself.

Katherine was alarmed when he told her, and asked, "What would they say?" But the second step was so audacious, that she laughed instead of trembling, and only awoke to her inconsistency when that storm blew up, of which more anon. They hired a gondola and rowed deviously by the Giudecca round to the Mole, where, just as they contemplated landing, the black omnibus, that steams hourly to the Lido in fine weather, was hailing her

tardy passengers. "Let us go," proposed Rous, eagerly. "A real sea-breeze will be delicious this sultry afternoon."

There was no time for doubt or debate-no time for second thoughts. It was now or never. Katherine's face dimpled all over with smiles of consent, and the next minute they were seated side by side in the dingy little craft, two of twenty excursionists, all bound to the same low, sandy, wild shore of the Adriatic. But when they disembarked at the wooden pier, our truant lovers saw none of their companions any more. They forsook the civilized region and scant fringe of inhabited dwellings to ramble over the reedy hillocks to the beach, and when they came in sight of the rolling white breakers and the deep green glittering sea beyond, they took hands like a pair of merry children, and ran down to the very verge of the waves. There was more wind than they expected, but not too much wind for them. It made the damask roses blow in Katherine's cheeks, and caused the hearts of both to dance with a wilful sense of liberty.

All the world knows how light-footed are such hours; how time flies, and leaves no foot-prints in such places. They had their freak, they enjoyed their escapade, and felt still unwearied when the glooming of the sky overhead warned them to be-

gone. Through a gap in the desert ridge they stood a few minutes to gaze at the distant city, bathed in sunshine, then hurried their steps and regained the pier—only in time to lose their last chance of returning in the omnibus-gondola.

But they had a choice of boats and boatmen—primitive boats and rugged, brown men to whom a late stroke of hard work was most welcome; for they had toiled all day at doing nothing, and their poverty was worse than picturesque. Wind and tide were both against them—a rising wind and a falling tide; and before long the oars drave heavily, as if rowing in mud, and the rowers disputed one against the other whether they were in the best channel.

"It would not be agreeable to be stranded on this mud-bank until the next flood," remarked Rous.

Certainly not. The wind whipt their faces smartly, and, at intervals, a gust of salt spray dashed over and drenched them. Katherine was but lightly clothed, and began to shiver. Rous folded her close to his breast to keep her warm: "Was she afraid?" he asked. "Oh, no!" she answered, smiling up in his face as she cowered safe in his arms. They made very slow progress, and it began to be dark. Then it began to rain. Their anxious friends

looking out from the balcony watched the boat, not knowing, but half guessing who might be in it.

"If they be, this end to their fun will teach them to play truant again," said Colonel Eliot, grimly.

Madame dolorously observed that Katherine would get wet, and she had no shawl with hernone. The Squire held his peace. He had fallen into the practice of saying nothing when words could do no good. But he wished his darling would come. And at last she came, that bold delinquent, her cousin Rous, encouraging her, as they mounted the stairs, to have a spirit, and brave out her misdemeanour. But it seemed they were not to be scolded. Colonel Eliot issued forth into the corridor and received them, hoping, with a polite sneer, that they had spent a satisfactory afternoon. Madame laid a hand on Katherine's clothes and said: "As I anticipated—soaked through!" and hustled her off to her room, with the Squire's help and approval.

"Give her a comfortable bouillon, and make her go to bed," was his dictum, and it had the old lady's firm acquiescence.

. In vain Katherine pleaded against such unnecessary fuss: "Am I sugar, am I salt that I shall melt in a little water?" said she, pettishly. "I never catch

cold-what nonsense!" But Madame quietly persevered—her young lady's premature relegation to bed would be a punishment if it were nothing else -she would remember not to incur it again. So Kate pouted and submitted, protesting that she did not believe it was nine o'clock yet; begging to know if Rous was being put to bed on a supper of broth too-he was liable to take cold if she was; she was not aware that young men were any tougher than young women-in fact, Kate being in a lively, happy humour, was quite naughty with her tongue, and Madame was shocked at her. But no: Rous, blessed in his sex, kept his fate in his own hands. He had seen and understood his father's polite sneer, and not liking him in that temper, he had hastened to seek his dinner down-stairs, and was now enjoying a game of billiards after it.

The Squire was thus left alone with his brother, as he had not been yet since his arrival. The events of the day led naturally up to the subject, and Colonel Eliot began to speak of his son's engagement. He had not named it before, except to Rous himself, withheld by a generous sentiment of pity for the Squire, who, in his eyes, was the only person that had really suffered by his wife's iniquitous fraud and imposition. The matter was not easy to approach. The poor Squire felt what was coming,

and began to shake and beat upon his knee in advance.

"No one could wish to blame you, Ned—but was it wise, was it giving Rous half a fair chance to bring him abroad with Katherine? Propinquity, opportunity and a pretty face have done his mischief irretrievably—so he says."

"The mischief was done, if mischief it be, within twelve hours of his arrival from India last autumn," interposed the Squire. "Ask him—he will tell you himself that they met as cousins at Bently, and fell in love incontinently."

"Love at first sight! Pshaw! Katherine is, no doubt, very taking, but I never saw any signs of silly susceptibility in him. He is not at all impressible, or he would hardly have escaped our sirens on the hills."

"So much the better—he will be the more constant then. They began by defying me when I opposed their attachment on the ground of cousinship, and they may well defy you on the strength of an affection that has stood a complete reversal of fortunes. It is my hearty desire—the only desire I have left—to see those two united and happy. Don't disappoint me, Henry! Kate is very dear to me; she was always a loving good child. The calamity that has befallen us does not change that

—cannot change it." The Squire spoke with tremulous warmth and eagerness; his face, lean and haggard now, kindled with feeling. His brother was touched, and sat for some minutes in silence, his head on his hand, concealing his eyes. His next remark, the sum of much secret cogitation, was very unfortunate.

"I consider that we had been infamously used, Ned. And you still endure that woman in your house?"

"What! what!" said the Squire, and groaned, and turned aside.

His most unhappy wife! He did not defend her by a single word. What could he say in extenuation of her guilt, and his own forgiveness? Nothing—unless that in spite of wrong, he loved her. And such a plea would but excite contempt; for his brother was thinking of his own loss by the long deceit—though practically what had it amounted to? The Squire had applied himself to the task of saving money to indemnify his nephew for a deposition that he was not of an age to appreciate at the time of its occurrence, and at Bently or away from it, he had always enjoyed the privileges of a son. Materially he had been despoiled of no good thing that could be done for him, or given to him. He had but resigned for a term the name of the heir,

Colonel Eliot felt that he had spoken amiss, that he had touched a wound too sorely sensitive to bear it. He recurred to the original grievance. "You had refused to allow Rous's courtship of Katherine in the first instance, Ned; what possessed you to give it such countenance and encouragement immediately that abominable deceit was found out?"

"They were honestly fond of each other, Henry; and it seemed the happiest way out of the wood for all of us."

"My thanks would have been due to you if you had sent Rous off to re-consider himself and his position. I say nothing against Kate; she is a very pretty girl, a very fair excuse for almost any folly, but at the same time, he ought to have been given the opportunity of consulting his better judgment, and also of consulting me."

"Perhaps it would have been wiser," said the Squire in a low, grieved voice. He did not plead what a sad little company of pilgrims they would have been without his nephew, but he knew that Rous made all the difference in the world to him and Kate.

"Rous is his own master," the Colonel went on.
"I presume that you intend to support the arrangement that you have helped the young people to make, whatever may be my prejudice against it!"

"I have told you what I wish, Henry. Put yourself in my place with regard to Katherine. The sooner they can be married the easier I shall be—it is the last, only care and anxiety I have. That done, I shall be ready to say my *Nunc dimittis*."

"Nonsense, Ned! Who gives up like that? You have many good years before you, please God."

"I think not. But you come after me—not Rous yet."

"I shall go back to India. I have made my work there, and must finish it. Rous can take to country squiredom if he chooses. I feel as if I had been cheated of my son!"

Harsh and unreasonable words vex and hurt us as sharply as just reproaches. The Squire was deeply pained, but he would not recriminate. "Don't let us fall out, Henry!" was all he answered to the implied accusation. But Colonel Eliot refused to be propitiated. He had worked himself into a fume of ill-temper, in which he took himself away, and left his brother alone.

The poor Squire's heart ached again! What a world of troubles this was! What misconceptions, what misunderstandings even amongst those who loved each other best; God help them all! He sat sunk in melancholy, almost crying for weakness and weariness of his life, till a sudden recollection struck

Katherine's Trial.

him of that draft for a vindictive will awaiting his completion in his despatch-box. He sought it, and on the impulse of the moment, destroyed it: or rather, he returned unconsciously to the principles that had guided his actions, before sorrow had shaken his mind.

"That would be a wrong—I will not do it. Better leave my darling in God's hands altogether," was his reflection as he tore up the witness to his temporary anger. And he was more at peace when it was done. He could even open his blotting-book, and begin a letter to Mr. Morgan, telling him why he had cancelled it. But he tired before it was finished, and left it between the leaves, proposing to send it on the morrow.

He waited for an hour after that, expecting his brother would return, or that Rous would come upstairs, but neither appeared; they had gone to the Royal Gardens where there was music. At length, overcome by drowsiness, and having nothing to divert his sad thoughts, he repaired towards his room, but at Katherine's door met Madame coming softly out. "Is she sleeping, my pretty dove?" he asked the old lady.

"Sleeping beautifully! These young creatures take no harm in any sort of weather, so they be happy and strong in their spirits."

"Let me go in." It was a custom of the Squire's from Katherine's babyhood to visit her the last thing at night—his wife and Joyce had often smiled at him—what a motherly nurse he was, how he loved that child! He had only relinquished the custom, since their coming abroad.

Windows in Venice on the Mole, and high up, remain open all the May nights with impunity. The weather was too fresh for mosquitoes yet, and Katherine's room was redolent of pure sea-air. Kate herself was lapt in the lightest and sweetest of slumbers; but the Squire always found some crease in her pillow to smoothe, some corner of her coverlet to straighten, hushing and purring over her with a tender, familiar voice that she heard even in her sleep; for she murmured, "Poor papa," and turned her face to be kissed, all without waking.

Madame, bidding him good-night as he went out again, was glad to remember afterwards, and to tell the others, that she had seen a smile on his dear, kind face, as if he were happy and amused in his own mind. Perhaps it was with some recollection of Katherine, when she was a little coaxing thing who asked mighty favours between two sleepy kisses, and found him very rarely hard enough of heart to refuse her petitions.

## XVIII.

## Foreshadowings.

THE sky was cloudy in the morning; there was even a wet mist in the air, and it was quite chill on the Mole when Rous and Katherine took their walk before breakfast. They came in, as usual, to find the table spread, and Madame waiting to preside. Colonel Eliot was also there, but not the Squire.

"Where is papa?" was Katherine's first word.

"He is not out of his room yet, for a miracle," said Madame.

They waited a few minutes, and then Rous proposed to go, and give his uncle a call. He went and knocked at his door. There was no answer. A sudden, indefinable fear laid hold upon him; he tried the handle gently, it yielded, and he went in. The Squire lay as if asleep, but it was no healthy, natural sleep. Rous spoke, and he neither heard nor answered. Colonel Eliot had followed his son: "What is the matter? Why does he not come?" he asked, and then he too was startled by the spectacle of the prone and helpless figure. "Is it a fit? What is it?" he said impatiently.

Rous had vanished to send a messenger for help. Katherine was looking out of the sitting-room. "Don't be frightened, dearest; go to your breakfast with Madame—we will come by-and-by. The Squire is not very well, and I am going to send for a doctor," cried he, and as he ran down-stairs, he waved his hand to bid her retire into the room.

By this time Madame was alarmed, and went without more ado to Mr. Eliot's bed-side. She appeared very grave when she returned, but she too said: "Let us have our breakfast, dear child, and then, if we are wanted after, we shall be ready."

Katherine was ever docile in difficult moments. She trembled with anxiety, but she raised no cry. They kept the door ajar, and heard presently Rous's swift foot preceding one more heavy-paced along the corridor. Then there was quick running to and fro; and Colonel Eliot came in with a dismal, preoccupied air, and sat him down before his plate to eat with as little appetite as the others, He did not speak to Kate, and in reply to Madame, he only said: "There is no telling yet how it may end. It looks serious—a sort of lethargic stupor."

Katherine got up, and was just going out when Rous appeared. "Let us telegraph for Dr. Masterman," whispered she with a most wistful earnestness. "He promised me that he would come to us if we wanted him, wherever we might be."

Colonel Eliot looked up quickly: "It will be over one way or the other before Dr. Masterman could arrive," said he; "it is of no use being at that expense."

Rous saw that Katherine was indignant. He knew that his father cared for money as little as any man; why, then, had he mentioned money at such a moment? It might be common-sense, but it sounded very prudently unkind. Hot tears rushed to Kate's eyes, and she cried bitterly for a little while when she was safe in her room. Madame, who equally disapproved of Colonel Eliot's remark, spoke acceptable words of counsel: "My dear child, take your own good heart for guide, and don't be so easily abashed by a rough word. Your poor papa depended on you—you have a right to decide what shall be done. Let us go, we two, and despatch a message to Dr. Masterman. His old friend is the only person who knows the Squire's constitution."

Before Madame had acquitted her conscience of this advice, Kate was already bathing her eyes and putting on her hat to carry it into effect. Then she wrote out a brief despatch which Madame approved. "I will tell Cousin Rous," said she loyally, and took courage to enter the sitting-room for the purpose. She found her lover and his father together, both dejectedly silent, but when she announced the errand on which she was bound, Colonel Eliot asked with his civil sarcasm: "Does the young lady fear that we may withhold from our kinsman any succours he is capable of receiving?" Nobody answered him, but Rous flushed, and there was almost a coldness in his tone as he said to Kate: "I would have done it. Let me see the message you are sending." He read it, and added two or three important words, but he did not offer to go instead, nor to accompany her, and she turned from him quite hurt and wounded.

Madame understood how she felt, and said calmly: "Never mind, dear! It is better to have the reproaches of the living than to suffer your own reproaches after you have left something undone that might have saved a friend."

"Yes, yes," agreed Kate; and quickened her steps along the Mole, where the mist of the morning had now increased to a driving rain.

When they returned, their task done, she shut herself up in her room, for a dreary long wet day.

That other room, where now for many dreary days all the interest of life seemed to centre, was closed against Katherine. She saw men coming

and going, grave men learned in the curious mechanism of nature, who were dealing with the poor old Squire according to their light; not letting him slip through their fingers, yet hardly keeping such a hold upon him as to be able to bid his beloved hope. Colonel Eliot and his son were not nurses. A nurse was brought in from the hospital, and placed under the supervision of Miss Dacres, who had experience that way. Colonel Eliot thanked her often and warmly for the comfort and help she was of in his trouble—he assumed that it was his trouble chiefly. Rous did not contradict him, but Katherine's sweet pathetic face was haunting. She looked to him, and only to him, for news and a kind word. They were not so often left to themselves; the Colonel sat indoors nearly the whole day, and kept his son within call; while Madame, in the exercise of her customary sound discretion, insisted that Katherine must go on with her study of Venice, to occupy her mind, and save her from fretting.

Poor Kate, what a multitude of vanishing glories she beheld with the eyes of the flesh, the eyes of her spirit sealed with anxiety and sorrow! She spent hours in St. Mark's because it was not far off, and because its sombre repose suited with her thoughts. But she could have given no account of its marbles and mosaics, of its golden altar and jewelled relics.

She cared for none of these things while her imagination was darkened; she loved its solemn music, and that was all. It stifled her to be under a roof, fatigued her to be driven through galleries of pictures, and churches full of prodigious monuments. So Madame, considering her, endured in gondolas the sirocco blast which succeeded to the mist and the rain, conveying her one day to the green shades of the Pappadopoli Gardens, and another to the arid populousness of the island cemetery.

"Why did we come here? What a wilderness of graves!" said she mournfully. They gathered some tall reeds and poppies amongst the grassy mounds, and when they brought them home and were asked where they had found them, Colonel Eliot remarked with his disagreeable smile, that it was an odd place to visit for pleasure. And Katherine blushed.

What was it that she blushed for? Shyness, shame, anger, pride, insulted feeling? Kate was well aware that had she been in very truth what until so lately all the world had believed her to be, she would not have blushed as a rejoinder to Colonel Eliot's sneer—or rather, there would have been no sneer to provoke a blush. Rous was not present on this occasion, and she went away in silence with

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a burning face. Madame said all she could to console her, but Kate was not easily consoled.

"How different my life is without the protection of poor papa!" cried she impetuously. "Oh, it is miserable to be despised!"

"Dear child, who despises you? Colonel Eliot shows bad temper, but his disposition is generous."

Katherine had youth's way of allowing no qualifications; she refused to believe that a generous disposition can co-exist with a bad temper. "That is one of the indulgent false things people say, A generous disposition has a tender regard for the feelings of all; bad temper has none—it's hard words and hard looks hurt like a blow."

"My dear husband used to declare that bad temper was answerable for most of the misery of human life," said Madame, reflecting.

"He was a wise man! I know one person whose happiness it is remorselessly destroying."

Of course, Katherine spoke of herself, of her own happiness. Yet if at that moment, five minutes after she had left him, she could have surprised Colonel Eliot, she would have found neither scorn nor triumph on his visage, but an expression of vext mortification that he had been so spiteful as wantonly to vex her. The mischief was that when he had sinned in this sort, though he was sorry, he

forgave himself in such haste that he was ready to sin again at the next opportunity. His old prejudice against Katherine remained in full force, for all he was conscious of its unfairness; and there had been intervals since his arrival in Venice when he had felt that he could hate her.

Katherine was too sensitive not to discern this; too proud not to resent it. There was a touch of the absurd in his loftiness towards her, and she became exceedingly restrained, speaking in his presence only when she was spoken to—he looked as if it were a liberty if she did otherwise. The root of the matter was, that Katherine being not his brother's daughter, behaved too much as if she were—or, as he put it, took too much upon herself, considering what she really was. Rous did his best to shield her, but it was quietly; for it would have been terrible to provoke a quarrel in the present position of affairs.

The whole party continued to dine daily at the table-d'hôte. The majority of the guests changed many times during their anxious waiting on the poor Squire's health, but Miss Dacres and her niece were amongst those who lingered. Colonel Eliot professed a lively admiration for Hetty Collingwood, whose vivacity was unfailing, and Rous would have met with no discouragement from his father if he

had chosen to admire her also. But Rous, if a little out of humour with Katherine, still felt her charm and beauty beyond compare, and had no inclination to amuse himself with any other young lady. He looked almost stern in these days, almost forbidding, except to Kate herself, sueing for a caress, deprecating his understood reproach. And Kate needed his kindness to keep up her self-respectshe could have cried sometimes for the slights Colonel Eliot allowed himself to inflict upon her. Her story was told to his friend Miss Dacres from his own point of view, and though she was of a cool judicial mind, she was not proof against his prejudice. She too charged Katherine with a spoilt wilfulness, though she tried to be good to her, invited her to her room, lent her books, and took her out with her niece. But Kate had no pleasure in the society of strangers. If she could not have her Cousin Rous for company, let her have Madame or nobody. For this Colonel Eliot said she was self-absorbed, unsocial and uncourteous. Poor Kate, she was simply very unhappy, out of conceit with life, and infinitely anxious and distressed for the Squire whom she was not suffered to see.

When would Dr. Masterman arrive—that was the event that they all awaited with impatience. It was now the sixth day since the Squire's seizure. He

was restored to consciousness, but the remedies had been severe, and his strength was quite gone. His brother and his nephew were admitted to his room occasionally, but talking was forbidden, and he was left for the most part with his nurse. It struck Rous sometimes that his uncle looked wistfully at the door, as if expectant of another visitor, but he feared Kate's emotion. One evening, however, the poor Squire made it understood that he wanted her, and she was called to him. After all, to witness the emotion of those we love is less painful than the cold care of hired attendants. Kate shed many tears and kissed him, and folded his feeble hand in her soft warm clasp, and sank on her knees, hiding her face against his pillow. And he looked at Rous, standing by in sadness, as if committing her to his love and honour, and asked if they had written to Padua—to her father. When he was told that they had not, he said: "Then do—let him come here." His thoughts still ran the most on Katherine.

The letter was written in the morning by Kate herself, and she and Madame went out with it to the post. That done, Madame said the day was long, and they would go to the Scuola di San Rocco for an hour or two. Katherine was resigned, and they went by sinuous canals and ruinous palaces until they landed at the stair of the famous house

of that art-loving brotherhood who were the chief patrons of Tintoretto. To Katherine it was but one more tedious repetition of grandeur in decay and abandonment-more halls with marble floors, and ceilings caryed and gilded, and vast canvases upon the walls, which from moment to moment she could scarcely see for the tears in her eyes, and their ache in her heart. But Madame always did her duty by pictures and monuments, whatever else was betiding, and she went about diligently and devoutly, contemplating "The Nativity," "The Crucifixion," and many other religious paintings from the Life of our Lord, as if they were the first she had seen yet, or the last she ever was to see. There were grotesque sculptures in wood besides to puzzle and perplex her, and there was a patient woman for housekeeper of the establishment, with whom she engaged in conversation on the past, present, and future of the brotherhood—a large theme of discourse, of no interest to Katherine, who wandered away into a narrow dim chamber, the councilchamber apparently, and sat down to rest and wait for the conclusion of her dear old comrade's conscientious investigations.

The only ornament of this little room was a crayon sketch by Titian under glass, an *Ecce Homo* of great beauty and pathos. Katherine gazed at it

until she could bear to gaze no longer, and then, as Madame neither called nor came to seek her, she strayed out to the grand staircase, and sat down in the sun on the marble steps. And here, at last, Madame found her, lost in reverie opposite one of the noble windows, broad, square-headed, with deep ledges, stone mullions, and cloudy octagonal glazing. A trellis of dusty ivy growing out of a pot was trained up one of the shafts, and a few starveling plants besides—a myrtle, a scented geranium, and a rose—were striving hard to live in very dry and unpropitious circumstances.

"Oh, Katherine, but you are lazy," murmured her ex-governess with mild rebuke. "It is not good to indulge your melancholy. And there are some of the finest pictures in Venice here."

"I see them," said Kate without lifting her head.

"See them! What do you see?"

"A face of agony crowned with thorns. A palace window and stair, and a barge lying at its gates, heaped with dead people. They are throwing the bodies down from the window. There is a beautiful woman with the plague-spot on her breast, who is still alive, and a youth who might be her son. St. Rocco died of the plague, did he not? Perhaps

that is why Tintoretto painted it on these walls dedicated to him?"

"Did Tintoretto paint it? Dear child, you will carry away a very confused recollection of many things that it is quite possible to know perfectly. What a pity to have so wasted your opportunities, which may never return!"

"Oh, Maddie, I am sick of pictures and symbols. Just now my life seems all one pain; and there is far more suggestion of comfort in those poor, weedy. straggling plants because they remind me of cottagewindows at home. Oh, I wish we were there! I wish we were there!"

"You pay Venice a very poor compliment."

"I shall not forget Venice. I feel to know it—
it is a lovelier picture of itself than any that are
treasured in it. I suppose, Maddie, when I am as
old as you, and as inured to death and trouble, I
shall try to care more for things and less for people.
But at this moment I have not a thought to spare
from poor papa. Ah! if I should lose him! Since
last night that terror has beset me. Let me go
back to him, let me go back!"

## XIX.

## The Squire has his own Way.

THERE was the stir of an arrival at the door of the "Bella Riva" when Madame and Katherine reached it, and Rous Eliot was there with the new-comer. It was Dr. Masterman, at last. He looked jaded with fast travelling, and gave Katherine but a dull welcome. Rous also had a very heavy countenance. "My father is in the Squire's room, Kate; don't go in," said he, warning her. And she went silently upstairs, feeling as if she had nowhere any place. Poor little troubled soul!

The Squire and his brother were having a talk about her in continuation of that debate which was begun the night before the Squire's seizure. Colonel Eliot was not in a more yielding mood now than then. He was perverse, sullen and cross.

"Of course, they have had every chance of falling deeper and deeper in love. If they had set out with a fund of aversion they would have got over it, and have taken to courting for pure idleness, and want of something to do."

"I have always heard that it was a great trial Katherine's Trial. 18

for people to travel together," said the Squire meekly.

"Pooh, pooh! They enjoy it. It is as good as being married already—those who are married might say it was better."

"Then you cannot think seriously of requiring them to separate now?"

"What is the use of shutting the stable-door when the steed is stolen? Rous will neither be curbed nor driven against his will, and Miss was never too docile if I recollect."

"Henry, she has the finest temper, the loveliest disposition!"

"She has a lovely pensive face, and a lovely round figure, and that is far more to love's purpose. If she had been ugly and good as an angel, Rous would not have looked at her. You don't know that boy."

The Squire sighed, and lay still for a few minutes. The Colonel sat and frowned. He had hardly the heart to contradict his brother, but his mind was set against Katherine; and it was with a feeling of intense irritation that he heard the next suggestion that issued faintly from his elder's lips. "They might be married here. There is a consul and an English chaplain. Lawyers and settlements we can dispense with."

"Married here!" echoed Colonel Eliot in a low, astonished, angry voice.

"Why not? If I could see them married, I should die happy."

"You are not going to die, Ned. Don't talk of dying! Dr. Masterman will soon have you on your legs again."

"It was a sweet thought of my darling to send for him, but neither Masterman nor anybody else can do me much good now. You'll bury me here, Henry—I had an impression when we came abroad that I should not live to go back to Bently. But, I see it pains you to talk of it, so let us have done. And send Rous to me if he is indoors."

Colonel Eliot went away mightily displeased, but holding his peace. A steadfast will bent on a holy deed is stronger than the strongest prejudice. The Squire assumed that he was to have his way, and no doubt he would have it.

Dr. Masterman was in the sitting-room, giving Rous the news from home while waiting for a summons from his old friend. "Either of you first or both together—my brother is ready to see you both," said Colonel Eliot brusquely.

Rous looked up surprised, Dr. Masterman rose to go. "There are tidings from Bently—sad or not, as you are pleased to take them. Mrs. Eliot is

dead," he announced to the father as he had done already to the son.

"I should say that her death is a release," replied the Colonel with sudden quietness. Tidings of death are always more or less of a shock. "You must use your own judgment as to telling the Squire. He believes himself to be very ill."

When Dr. Masterman had seen Mr. Eliot, he admitted that he was, indeed, very ill, and he said no more. But he changed his regimen, and it did not seem to those who understood that the physician had abandoned hope, if the patient had. It was a risk, but he even ventured to tell the Squire of his poor wife's death, and it did not appear that it shook him much.

"Poor Louy! I shall not be long after her. She was a great sufferer—we shall meet again very soon, please God!" And then he mentioned it as desirable to keep the event, at present, from the knowledge of Katherine, and asked again for Rous.

Rous was not slow to understand what was required of him. "It shall be sir, as you will," said he with grave excitement, and his countenance, so clouded an hour ago, cleared maryellously. "Leave me to prepare Kate."

The Squire acquiesced, and seemed satisfied. "Now I have nothing more to crave and fret for,"

said he, and placidly laid his white head on his pillow. His nephew, regarding him, thought that in this calm there was a good hope of restoration.

Madame and Katherine were wending their sad deliberate way to the sitting-room, where luncheon was served, when Rous was leaving his uncle's room. Pretty, pathetic Kate! how winsome she was with the shadow of tears in her eyes! Rous had an impulse to comfort her, and she was instantly comforted at the sight of his glowing face. His father had put a cold chill on him—on them both. Now her lover was himself again, and so was she! There was certainly a full true sympathy between these two. Colonel Eliot did not smile at all, either pleasantly or otherwise, when they entered the room, apparently hand in hand. His intervention was defeated.

Rous had to go out after luncheon, he said, on a matter of business; but Katherine, if she liked, might come with him. Kate looked doubtfully at Madame, then at Dr. Masterman. Madame said it would do her good to go. Dr. Masterman said: "I shall not have you in your papa's room, even if you stay."

"Then come, Kate; nobody else wants you," urged Rous. And Kate went.

The afternoon was fresher than the morning;

there was a breeze on the Grand Canal. The acacias in the Royal Gardens wafted their green banners in the pleasant wind. The sirocco had ceased to blow, and there was health and exhilaration in the moist air.

"Oh, it is happy in a gondola again with you, dear!" was Katherine's impulsive exclamation.

"I am glad you enjoy it, for it is not likely to be the last time," said Rous with a mischievous sparkle in his eyes.

"I do enjoy it! But what is in your thoughts, Rous? You are making fun of me!"

"That I deny! I am contemplating you from a very serious point of view."

"Tell me what you are plotting?"

"You will know anon. Guess if you are impatient! Would you like to row in the same gondola with me all the days of your life?"

"Ah! that is being married! Some day I shall, of course, if you go on loving me."

"How soon a day—a long day, or a short day?"

"Oh, Rous, don't tease! It was that my heart leapt with delight to have you kind again! But we ought not to think of ourselves when poor papa is so ill, ought we?"

"He has just been bidding me be kinder to you

than ever, and I solemnly promised that I would, with my sweetheart's dear consent."

Something in Rous's voice made Katherine's breath come and go faster, and when she would have looked him in the face, her eyes drooped, her colour rose, and her blithe tongue was mute. She turned aside her head, and her mouth put on its melancholy fall. Rous understood that she was reasoning out the matter thus:

"Papa is leaving me, then, and he gives me to Rous before he goes that he may be sure I am taken care of."

She let her hand lie still in his, but her gaiety was quenched.

"It will be a sad bridal," she said presently, in answer to some wooing, kind words.

"I have seen sadder," Rous rejoined. "We love one another, and love is above death."

"Do you think that poor papa will die? I cannot believe it!"

"While there is life there is hope. He certainly thinks the worst of himself, and wants a release from earthly cares. You are his chief care, Kate, and when you are fast made over to me his mind will be the lighter."

"My own father is good—he would protect me at need. It is so very, very mournful to be married in the shadow of death. You would be glad to defer it too, dear Rous, if we could soothe poor papa?"

"No, Kate, I should not be glad to defer it. I shall be glad to have it over, and to feel settled for life, and sure that nothing can ever come between us any more. It would be quite against my wishes if you were left at Ravenna."

"Colonel Eliot does not love me. I must hope for no welcome from him!"

"Leave him out of consideration. He will reconcile himself to what cannot be helped, but he will give us no rest so long as he expects to prevail, and the sooner the conflict ends the better. My uncle feels that, and dreads a quarrel amongst us; so you see, Kate, that you are wanted for a makepeace. And like the sweet, unselfish soul you always were, you will forget yourself for the sake of others."

That argument was conclusive. What further impediments Katherine might have found to allege had her heart been against her dear Cousin Rous is not known; but she was silent, and he took her silence for consent.

Madame wept over Katherine when she heard what impended.

"My poor little Kate that I have carried on my

back so often! She was only four years old when I came to her," sobbed she, going into reminiscences as old people will. She pitied Katherine that she was condemned to such a hasty marriage. "The Squire will not die, it is not in his face—I have seen death many times, but it is not there. I would, my dear, that my lord might leave you a little while, and return again. You would be very well at Ravenna."

Katherine was so much of Madame's opinions that she repeated them to her Cousin Rous. He shook his head.

"It would be much happier if we stayed till poor papa is recovered," pleaded Kate.

"Can I turn chances into certainties?" answered Rous. "Why do you seek a reprieve? It could not be for long. We will go to Ravenna still. Dr. Masterman dares not hold out any positive hope, or he would be quick enough to speak—he wants perfect composure for his patient, and he says you alone can give it."

Kate was vanquished again, and when she went to the Squire for a few minutes before dinner, he blessed her for her compliance. He was weak and worn down, but calm and peaceful exceedingly. She asked him if he suffered much, to which he made answer that he suffered nothing worth mentioning. Dr. Masterman assured her, as they went downstairs together, that no one in pain of body or trouble of mind ever lay so still and placid of countenance.

"It is a relief to him to know that his unhappy wife is gone first, and especially that she had peace in her death," said he, the words slipping out unawares. He would have recalled them the next moment, but he could not.

Kate stood an instant, then turned back. "Oh, Rous, poor mamma is dead, and you did not tell me," said she looking up in his face as she met him following.

Colonel Eliot heard her gentle reproach, saw her suddenly whitened cheeks, and eyes dark with gathering tears.

"I do believe that is a good girl," said he with the first feeling of compunction concerning her that he had had yet.

Everybody made a halt upon the stairs, but finally everybody, except Katherine, went down: Rous turned back with her, but he also followed in a few minutes. Madame who had heard the news under a caution, gave Dr. Masterman a reproachful glance: "My dear Kate has too much to bear all at once," murmured she. Kate had run to the Squire's room, and Rous, unable to persuade her

away, had left them together. Perhaps it was as well for both. The Squire roused himself to speak to her.

"Is it so very hard a separation, my pet? Our old rector is at Bently again, and he has written me a few kind words. Before the end your poor mamma gave up her fruitless striving to atone for her guilt by miserable penances, and cast herself on the mercy of God—where we must all cast ourselves, sinners that we are! She is gone, Kate. It is better for her, so you must not rebel. Rous is left to you—you will want nothing when he cares for you."

"Rous is good, I love him dearly, but I love you too, papa. Oh, let us go home together!"

"By and by, Kate. To-morrow Mr. Fenwick will come, and in his presence and mine you and Rous shall plight your troth. Then your father shall carry you away to Ravenna, and after a little while Rous will go and bring you home. And you must not be too sorry for those you lose when you have him——"

"You will be here still, papa?"

"That decision rests with God, Kate. Almost I hope not. I am ready to die, since your poor mamma is dead. I should have been sorry to leave her behind, though I know you would have been

faithful to her—but the world has become a desolate place. Bently would feel lonely without her. We had been lovers and friends over thirty years that is a long while, Kate. And I grow old. I am very feeble. Yes, I am ready to die."

"Oh, but, papa, we are not ready to give you up! We will comfort you, you will have us. You always said that Rous was like a son, and you know I am your own child in affection. Why will you die! I hate death!"

"Hush, Kate, hush! You don't know what you say. Be a good girl. Remember, 'God's will be done!'"

"I will pray, then, that God's will may be my heart's desire! God has been so kind in turning my evil to my good that perhaps He will give you back to me, perhaps He will give you back to me!" And with this she fell into such a passion of tears that the poor Squire was fain to let her weep. The sight of her devotion gave him an after-taste of the sweetness there is in all sorrow meekly borne, and perhaps, also, a foretaste of the sweetness there might still be in his life restored to her love.

When Madame came up from dinner she made Katherine eat and drink, and then sent her out into the cool evening air with her Cousin Rous. If they were to spend their lives together, and to begin so soon, she might be dispensed from her duties. And she was very tired. Everybody was tired. Colonel Eliot had given in, and saw them go without a word. He sat in the balcony thinking of many things. He reflected that it had never been of any use in former times to struggle against his elder brother's will. It was a most steadfast and persistent will. For a blessing, his purposes were mostly such as a man may persist in, and not come after to curse his obstinacy. His attachment to Katherine was natural, it was a long habit, and a very tender one. But there had certainly been something very subtle in Colonel Eliot's prejudice against her; something not to be accounted for except on the score of a singular discernment—so he told himself. He had never taken to her, she was not of their blood, she never had any title to her place, she had not one feature of the Eliots. But if she was to be adopted amongst them for good and all, it was much to be thankful for that she had qualities and a beauty that would grace the old name. Rous and she might keep up Bentlyfor himself, he should go back to India-he had a great and useful work in hand there; at home he could have none. He was a great man there; at home his son was a greater. He had been absent all his life nearly, and the people called his son the Young Squire. He gave a long sigh, and felt himself softening into something like sympathy with the constant lovers who were to be the future representatives of an ancient and venerable house.

Meanwhile the constant lovers took a gondola, and rowed out a little way on the open sea. The tide was high, and there was the silver ripple of moonlight on it, the faintest ripple from the young moon just rising.

"When this young moon is old, Kate, we shall be at home. That will content you?" said Rous.

"That will content me only if papa be with us. I cannot bring myself to give him up. Why should he not live and be comforted? It cannot be wicked to beg and pray to keep him, can it?"

"No, sweetheart, but a pious duty rather."

"There is no resignation in me yet to parting with those I am fond of; I think resignation must grow as sorrows multiply. It does not come to us young. It is pleasant—it is happy in the world! I should be very loth to leave it. I am sorry even for poor mamma. To-morrow I must put on black for her. It is a whole week since she died."

"To-morrow you must put on white for me! No, Kate, I'll listen to no plea and no remonstrance! I must have you in white. Afterwards, perhaps, you shall be allowed a black ribbon and necklace, but no black dress."

"People will say I am unfeeling, and show no respect."

"But I know you are very feeling, dear Kate. And let me preach you a homily on your duties—henceforward you have not to please 'people,' but to please me."

"Dear Rous, may papa decide it?"

"Wait till after to-morrow. To-morrow you will know your master."

"That sounds severe! Shall you be so tyrannical? shall you be my master?"

"Why, Kate, Love will!"

"Ah, if you are only another name for Love, I don't think I shall care."

That night Katherine spent a long while on her knees. Madame looked into her room twice. The second time she found her dear child whom she pitied standing with her little Indian treasure-casket open in her hands. One after another she took out the childish relics and kissed them. "Good-by, baby things," said she. "No, it shall not be good-by! They are all perfumed with the cassie Rous bought in the flower-market at Verona. Let life go on without a break!"

"You are very happy, Kate, you are very happy,

and I have been crying for nothing," said the old lady of many experiences. "You have said your prayers, and the good God has given you peace in your heart. That is well, that is better than all. Youth is stronger than age, and quite as wise, quite as wise in its way, I often think!"

Mr. Fenwick reached Venice the next day towards noon. Colonel Eliot was the first person he saw at the "Bella Riva." The artist walked into the newspaper room while his name was being carried upstairs to his daughter, and there sat Colonel Eliot, patiently perusing The Times a week old. The traveller's big blue eyes and red beard, and his subdued whistle as he stood at an open window revealed him to the Colonel, who again secluded himself behind his broadsheet after a minute's critical survey of the stranger. It is to be supposed that the result was not unsatisfactory; for when John Fenwick was summoned, he dropt the news and sate reflecting with a pleasanter face than he had lately worn. Thus his son found him when he returned in haste from the transaction of certain civil preliminaries necessary to the marriage of strangers in Venice.

"Mr. Fenwick has arrived, Rous. And since you went out I have been reading a letter your

poor uncle had begun to write to Morgan. It has touched me above a little. You will find it in his blotting-book—read it too. He trusts us both so entirely for Katherine, that it would be a shame to grieve him in the least thing. So if the young lady is forgiving, let us all be friends before we part."

This was a concession, indeed! Rous grasped his father's hand, and thanked him energetically. "But I do hope and trust," said he, "that there will be no parting in the matter. Masterman is very cautious, but I do not think he is anxious."

If Dr. Masterman was anxious, he dissimulated his anxiety very skilfully from Katherine. He would say nothing more encouraging than, "Do what the Squire bids you, and trust that all will be well with him ere long;" but he had a cheerful air; and in the tremulous confidence this inspired, Kate consented to what was required of her—her father also consenting.

The marriage was performed that afternoon in Mr. Eliot's chamber. It was a very solemn and very pathetic scene. There were no witnesses but Mr. Fenwick and Madame, who shed tears the whole time. To gratify her lover, Kate had put on a white dress, and looked like a ghost, all but her shining eyes. The Squire was like a ghost, too, when they took her away. He smiled as he blessed her, but

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there was a regret in his face—she could see the regret when she had lost the smile. Colonel Eliot was moved to kiss her, and she fancied, when the train was bearing her away towards Padua, that all the faces gathered to bid her farewell had a wistful compassion in them—even Rous's face.

"Bring me good news of papa, dear, or I shall have no joyous welcome even for you," were her last words whispered as they were parting.

"Keep up your heart, Kate; the news that I shall bring you will be good," said he; and lingeringly he let her go.

She sat with claspt hands, all her thoughts ardent prayers for that beloved life; John Fenwick was silent too. The evening lights were on the level plain, beautiful only with the luxuriance of cultivation. Here and there a thatched beehive cottage roof peeped out amidst fruit-trees, and vineyards, or a porch where the women sat spinning. Katherine remembered all the way afterwards with extraordinary distinctness, though she seemed to see nothing then; she remembered every voice, every sound, though she seemed to hear nothing but the thrill of supplication trembling in her heart.

## XX.

## Waiting on Events.

The Signora had received a telegraphic message from her husband to prepare her for Katherine's coming, and the kind heart welcomed her warmly. The poor girl was glad to be taken into her tender arms, and soothed and comforted, and put to rest. Then Lisa listened with pitiful amaze to the transactions of the day.

"And do you suppose, my friend, that the good old man will not recover?" she asked her husband.

"I think he will not. I fear not. But let Katherine go on hoping to the last. They would hardly have sent her away if they had any assurance of his restoration. They are afraid of the effect upon her of any more painful excitement. She has had more than enough, poor child! We must try to keep her quiet now."

That needed no great effort. Katherine desired nothing the next day but to sit in the shade of the garden, and hear the birds twitter and see the children at play. Monna and Nina put their little arms about her neck, pressed their soft cheeks to hers, and ran away. The Signora did not fret her with much talk, and left her to seek her own occupation. This occupation was first writing to Rous,—she was very long about it; and then she wrote to Madame, whose courage had broken down at bidding her good-by. Towards evening she began to feel the hours long, and was glad to go with her father to visit Mr. Danvers. His garden was another restful change of scene.

Mr. Fenwick was still at work on his copies of the frescoes in the chapel, but he made an end for the present, and in the morning there was a general packing up of his domestic and artistic moveables for the migration to Ravenna. The weather was becoming very hot, and they deferred their start until the evening, proposing to stay at Bologna that night. It was very sultry in the hilly district beyond Padua, and when they entered the plains with their immense horizons, a storm was gathering black before them. At Ferrara the twilight ended, and it grew suddenly dark. Then began the roll of heavy thunder in the distance, which came nearer and nearer with broad illuminations of fire, revealing now wildernesses of green fields, now a campanile and clustered village roofs, now a broken bridge, a turbid river, and shallows of sand and white gleaming pebbles, where the spring-floods had passed and had gone down.

As they had made their journey from Padua to Bologna in the cool of the evening, so they made their journey from Bologna to Ravenna in the cool of the morning, through a country rich with cultivation but not picturesque. The very names of these old Italian cities are a romance, but when Katherine looked abroad on the land and the inhabitants. except for the vines and mulberry-trees, half-stript of their foliage to feed the silkworms, she could have imagined herself on the road from Bently to Steepleton on a market-day. At Castel-Bolognese there was a crowd of farmers and labourers who sustained the illusion, so much were the big, burly men, with tall sticks in their huge red fists, like the men of the same type in her own county. She half expected to hear some of them speak in her own tongue, and to find that they were graziers from home come out to inspect and purchase the magnificent cream-coloured oxen of which there were droves about.

Katherine had not much experience of any place to live in except Bently, but her father could have told her that Ravenna, that old-world city, had . many features of resemblance to venerable Eversley.

'Now we lare at home!" was the Signora's ex-

clamation as they drove through the dull and dusty streets. "Now we shall kiss our Luigi again, my friend; now Nina and Monna will see their dear brother——"

"And grandpapa and grandmamma!" cried Nina, with Monna for echo.

They all seemed so glad, so happy. Katherine felt as if in a dream—as we all feel when our hearts are elsewhere. Nothing beautiful, nothing imposing met the eye. Long blank walls enclosing airless gardens; long house-fronts with every shutter closed; shaded empty balconies; brick campaniles of fabulous antiquity standing awry; brick gable-ends of churches contemporary with the bell-towers; open archways and glimpses of paved courts, fountains, acacias; open door-ways and curtains of striped orange stuff to exclude the sun and let in the air.

The travellers turned in at one of these archways, from which a man was just issuing with a basket of apricot-coloured cocoons, carefully enveloped in muslin. The children hailed him with a shrill cry of delight, the Signora nodded him a recognition, and Mr. Fenwick inquired if those were the first cocoons from the farm. And then they all descended from the carriage into the embraces of a tall old gentleman with white hair, in a long loose

black coat, and of an old lady in a gown and cap quite in the fashion of the day. And there was Luigi too, a beautiful brown boy, in everybody's arms, demanding everybody's attention at once.

Katherine was forgotten for a moment, and then she was welcomed with a sort of tender, shy curiosity, and a letter was immediately given to her which she took with a sudden blush and smile of delight.

"From thy dear friend and lover?" whispered Lisa. "Come, I will find thee a place to read it!"

The grandmamma would lead the way, and in a minute Katherine found herself secluded in a large and lofty chamber, in a half-gloom, in a wonderful coolness, equally strange and pleasant. When she had time to look round she saw that the floor was of red brick, that the walls were stencilled with blue on a white ground, and that the draperies of the windows and bed were of rich orange linen.

She kissed her precious letter, and then read it. Rous had been apparently afraid of saying too much about his uncle, so he said very little, but that little was enough to make Katherine's heart light. We are always so ready to believe what we wish! She was bidden to write again that day—as if she needed any bidding!

Presently there came a tap at her door very low

down-little Nina tapping, bringing a message that the post did not go out till the evening, and breakfast was prepared. It was a breakfast not a little noisy with the three generations together full of news and affection, the youngest generation the fullest of all. It was a relief to put them into the garden. It was a relief to Katherine to follow them -to be alone with her own heart and her own thoughts. But as the Signora intimated to her husband, there might be too much of this musing, and he invited her to come to his painting-room. Katherine went. She had almost begun to tell herself that the time would be very long at Ravenna. That is the way people feel towards a dull place where they are not going to remain, where they are only waiting on events. Those about her understood very well, and had many kind pleas in her excuse.

This painting-room of John Fenwick's was the scene of many a happy day's work. He loved his art, and from the method with which he had laid out his life he was able also to enjoy it. There was a new canvas on his easel with just the first idea of a picture on it—Katherine could make nothing out, but the artist saw it finished. This room, like all the others in the house, was spacious—no, there was one small room, Lisa's sanctuary, not

often entered, and here was that portrait of Mrs. Fenwick that was like Katherine. He made her come and see it. It was the mild serene face of a very pretty old lady: her eyes were deep-sunken, but soft and beautiful.

"She has a look of love—why did she not forgive you, and take poor little me home to her when I was left motherless?" Katherine asked.

"How would poor little you have agreed with her embroidery frame and meshes of shining silk?" replied her father pleasantly. "You would have made a glorious tangle amongst them—you would have spoilt and hindered her work. She had to live. It was no uncommon thing in our condition to put a baby out to nurse. I myself, when I was weaned, was sent into the country, and I always, as a boy, preferred my nurse to my mother, and her cottage to my home."

Katherine said no more—she recollected the adage: "One half of the world does not know how the other half lives." In the sheltered haven of Bently she had learnt nothing beyond the traditions and customs of county society, and the shifts and privations of rustic life. Of the vast intermediate territory where, amongst rich urban folk, move the poor genteel, struggling professional people and shop-keepers, she had only the vaguest and

most imperfect notions—what else could she have, being but a simple, incurious girl of seventeen.

When they returned to the painting-room the artist sat down before his easel with a sense of freedom and delight that shone in his face. "Now, Katherine, talk to me—tell me anything you like, tell me about Bently," said he, and took a palette and sheaf of brushes in his hand as he settled himself with his air of contented well-being.

Katherine was quite willing to talk of Bently, and she talked of it as if she loved it. Her Cousin Rous's name came in very often-she called him "Cousin Rous" continually. It was a very genuine mind, a very pure good heart that she showed through all her confidences. And as she talked a lovely flush came into her face and a depth of sweetness into her eyes that charmed the artist. Unobserved he set a small panel on his easel and made a sketch of her; one of those momentary inspirations that convince us the painter has caught the true expression of a soul in its best moments, and fixed it for ever. He finished it in the course of the morning and never touched it again. He might paint other portraits of her more studied and elaborate, but never one to equal that.

By-and-by Katherine went away to write her letter: "People are much more alike than different



everywhere, I think. Nobody looks at all strange; there are no costumes about, only ordinary hats and clothes. The Signora's father and mother are handsome old people who might be English. He is a learned antiquary, she wears mittens and a cap like Madame. They both have loud voices -everybody has a resounding voice here except my father. The little ones make an immense clamour. My brother is a round brown little boy, like Monna, or one of those plump cherubs in the Holy Families put into a tight linen suit. There is a neglected garden behind the house, it is hot and damp within its high walls. The quick grey lizards dart in and out of the crumbling sun-baked stones. I am no more fond of the lizards here than Nina of the bees at Padua. Signor Polonia has a farm near the pine-forest where they cultivate silkworms. To-morrow, early, we are to go out there and spend the whole day, returning in the evening - I could wish with all my heart that you were coming too! You have made me almost easy about poor papa-I do not cease entreating God for him. I can understand now why women kneel so long in the churches—they are praying for some one whom they love. I cannot stay apart from the others, but it seems that in my heart I am remembering poor papa always. Oh, my love, if we take

him back to Bently, how more than happy we shall be!"

Rous Eliot had received Katherine's letter, and about the same hour of the morning when she was setting out for the farm, the only quiet one of a very merry troop, Dr. Masterman was hurrying up from the piazzetta stair with a countenance of great eagerness and satisfaction. He met Colonel Eliot and his son at the door of the hotel. They had not seen the Squire yet, but the Doctor had seen him before he went out, and he now made his report of his patient: "He has passed a fair night, his pulse is a little stronger, that is all I can say. This increasing heat is against him, yet I dare not attempt to move him by the road. There is a chance, however, if he can be prevailed upon to take it."

"He shall take it! What is it?" cried Rous impetuously.

"You see that large yacht lying out near the guard-ship? It is Sir Thomas Ranken's yacht. I have just been on board. There are plenty of comforts, good things to eat and drink. The Squire does not suffer from the sea, and Sir Thomas will carry him to England—him and me. He is leaving Venice to-night."

"That is very kind," said Colonel Eliot; "it is an offer not to be refused. I see it will be my brother's salvation!"

Rous said the same thing, and they all went upstairs together. The Squire heard what they had to advise with composure, and then asked if there was news of Katherine.

"Yes, sir, I will read you her letter—the chief part of it," said Rous, and he read that paragraph which has been given.

"Poor darling! I should wish to see her again —and I daresay she misses you, I daresay she is wearying for you. You had better go to Ravenna, Rous," was his uncle's tender comment and counsel.

"I will immediately set out, sir, when I have seen you safe on board Sir Thomas Ranken's yacht. I dare not go else. Kate would not acknowledge me!"

"Tell her to write home and give the servants their orders. She must take her poor mamma's place in the house, now—she is very young, she was only a child the other day, but I suppose she will learn."

Rous listened intently for further instructions. The Squire added: "I should like to know who will escort Madame Roussel as far as Paris?"

While Colonel Eliot was promising to take care

that the old lady was not neglected, and Rous was proposing that Kate and he should pick her up at Bologna or Milan on their homeward route, Dr. Masterman disappeared to make preparations for the Squire's removal to the yacht. He had not said that he would consent, but he had consented; and before the day grew sultry, his transport had been accomplished without mischief—he had bidden his nephew good-by, and had sent loving messages to Katherine, with a promise to meet her at Bently, God willing; and the yacht, with its two new guests on board, had put out a little further to sea, to catch one of those health-giving breezes on which the Doctor counted for his patient's restoration.

Colonel Eliot and his son returned to the hotel together.

"You will not care to stay here till to-morrow, perhaps?" suggested the elder with a little not unnatural hesitation.

"Why, no, sir," replied his son, surprised. "Do not you think of leaving Venice, at present?"

Miss Dacres in a picturesque sunshade of a hat was advancing to meet them, accompanied by her niece. There could be no doubt of it that the lady had a very charming smile, a very youthful blush. Was it a fancy or was the blush really reflected on Colonel Eliot's face? Rous said nothing,

but he thought the more. (He was mistaken—the lady had already said it was much too late.) His father proceeded to give Miss Dacres an account of what they hoped might be a favourable turn in his brother's condition. "He has everything in his favour from this moment, and a life prolonged for many, many years, we trust."

"And Mr. Rous and you are travelling to England together?" inquired the lady.

"Not exactly. My son is impatient to be off this instant to Ravenna to bring away Katherine. I shall travel to England alone, probably. You are wondering—it is of no consequence to keep their secret any longer, so I may tell you—To please the Squire, the young people were married the other day. Yes, it was very quietly done; and under the circumstances, I do not imagine that my company would be any benefit to them."

Miss Dacres spoke a few words of kind, conventional felicitation. Colonel Eliot answered as if he were perfectly reconciled to the event. Hetty Collingwood sparkled; looked pleased and interested, and said to her aunt as they parted with Rous and his uncle, and walked away: "That pretty girl!—I was sure those two were fond of one another, Aunt Winnie! I am glad they are married—how happy they will be!"

While Rous Eliot was rushing on his hot and dusty journey to Padua, to Bologna, to Ravenna, the long day was wearing on with Katherine and her companions at the farm and in the forest. They took her first to see the silk-worms fed and spinning, millions of them; then across a wide open space thickly covered with the harvest of pinecones, drying in the sun, over which an old man, housed in a tiny conical straw hut, kept guard all day and all night. Then she wandered away with her father alone under the aromatic shade of the glorious pines, and in and out amongst the low growth of fragrant juniper. And resting here, John Fenwick produced from his pocket-book that letter her poor young mother, in dying, had left behind her. It was the sole relic he had preserved. He gave it to Katherine to read, as he had promised at Padua, and then walked to a little distance to keep off the children, coming down on her with shrill vociferations. Kate's lip quivered and her eyes clouded over as she followed the tender lines, traced with a faint hand, but how fond a heart!

"If ever you read this, my own dear love, I shall not be by to comfort you in your tears. I shall be gone away—far, far out of sight and hearing! I don't quite believe it can be—and yet I

fear. So this is a sort of testament—I want to tell you all my kind thoughts, and true love and gratefulness; for you have made my life sweet to me, and very, very happy. You have been sorry sometimes, but I never wanted anything except that you should be glad again. If I die, and my baby lives, I should like it to go to your mother. And don't be too sad for me, dear, though I should wish you to remember me now and then. And I hope you will get on, and make a name like those old painters you talk of, and that our Father in Heaven will bless you and keep you always. Good-by, dear, I have nothing more to say, but living or dying I am your ever loving and most grateful KITTY."

Katherine re-folded the letter, touched and consoled. "That is how I love my dear Cousin Rous. She was just my own age—oh, it was very young to die! Poor little mother—No friends near—only her young husband—and he was restless and dissatisfied—So perhaps it was best—God knows!" Thus her thoughts ran for a few pathetic moments. Then she rose, and strayed to meet the Signora, who was advancing to seek her; the children hanging to her arms, and all laden with spoil of wildroses, and privet, and sweet wild thyme.

Lisa looked bright and joyous, and she soon cheered Katherine, talking to her and questioning her about her beloved future home. When one is young, the sorrows of the past are swift to retire before the joys of the present and the hopes of the time to come! And after their happy talk followed a yet happier silence, as they stood on the bridge over the canal, contemplating the lovely reflections in the water of the cattle, and the grand redstemmed pines on the banks, gazing across the salt marshes to the far-away blue mountains. All the while Katherine was absent in spirit, thinking of Rous and her poor papa.

An hour before sunset they were to set out on their return, because they had to stop by the way to show Katherine that lonely church in the marshes which was once the centre of a busy port. The scene was lovelier in the declining day than in the morning. There were a thousand delicate soft tints in the sky and on the earth that the broad sun effaced. Men and women were still toiling in the rice-fields, their stooping figures grey against the amber light. Larks and nightingales flooded the air with melody; and bright bits of colour, poppyred, blue-turquoise of forget-me-not, and white stars of daisies amongst the grasses glowed along the waste patches of land, and fringed the deep ditches where the great water-lilies floated amidst broad shining leaves.

John Fenwick accompanied Katherine into the church, so grand in its majestic simplicity, and made her notice the beautiful mosaic of the cupola over the altar—It is to be feared that the antiquities of St. Apollinaris-in-Classe were thrown away on Katherine. She looked at the mosaic, so old, so perfect, so curious; she looked at the fine marble columns and noble sarcophagi, and said, how dear Maddie would enjoy them all! Her father smiled to himself indulgently, and they went out again into the warm air, and stood where once had been the forecourt of the church, from which runs straight through the marshes a road long and arrowy, that vanishes on the horizon and not before. Katherine lost herself in thought, and was only roused by her father saying in a voice of soft surprise: "Katherine, who is this?"

It was Rous Eliot—her lover—her husband. "Is all well?" cried she in a ringing glad voice.

"All is well! This very day he set out for home!"

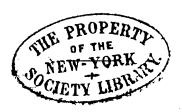
Oh! the joy of that good news! Rous had arrived at Ravenna, had heard whither they were gone, and too impatient to await their return, had come out to meet them. Five minutes ago Katherine was weary, now she walked on air. She would walk all along the road with Rous, hearing what he

had to tell-messages, blessings, and details of Mr. Eliot's removal to the yacht. Then she asked about Maddie - Well, Maddie would be almost independent; she was to travel to Paris with Miss Dacres and Miss Collingwood. Then about Colonel Eliot -Oh, he would take care of himself, and would be in England first; he would stay in London, how-And Rous suggested that, if Katherine pleased, they had better go straight home to Bently, that the good old Squire might have a bright welcome, and not be allowed to feel the loneliness of his bereavement on arriving. Katherine was all sweet compliance - too happy, too thankful, too grateful to God who had, as she said again, turned all her evil to such bountiful good-all her sorrow to such blessing and joy!

The day but one after, the young people left Ravenna. Signor Polonia had taken them for a tour of the antiquities: had delivered them a lecture before the grim effigy of Dante on his tomb; had referred them to their own historian, Gibbon, for the story of Galla Placidia and Theodoric, in whose mausoleums not a pinch of dust remains, and of Justinian and Theodora, immortal in mosaic; and as they were preparing to drive out of the courtyard, John Fenwick reminded them that at Bologna

they ought to see the "St. Cecilia" of Raffaelle, and by no means to forget the Francias—and if they stayed at Milan, they must find time to go to the old Dominican Convent, turned into barracks, where Leonardo's fresco of the "Last Supper" still survives on the refectory wall.

The Signora and the children stood by in a silent little group with a big round nosegay, which, at the last moment, was presented to Katherine for a farewell offering. "You will come, and see us before long?" she whispered to Lisa; and Lisa whispered: "Yes." When they were gone and out of sight, the children returned to their play in the garden, and the artist went back to his easel, hand in hand with his wife.



## CONCLUSION.

EXCEPT that it is July and not February, Bently has much the same air to-day as it had on a certain day six months ago. Katherine is again on the watch, again awaiting an arrival. But her Cousin Rous is with her now. They are on the terrace, where the roses are in full bloom, and the arrival they are expecting is the Squire. It is cool and pleasant, and there is a great shade under the limes. Miss Buxton has been over; she rode over on Sprite to give Katherine the treat of seeing her, and she has told the young lady that she is prettier than ever. Now Miss Buxton is gone, and Rous repeats the compliment, which Kate retaliates.

And Quince looks out as wooden as ever; and Joyce, at her window, in bonnet and shawl, sees "the children," and is glad they are happy—and that misery is not to come of it; and after satisfying her eyes with one look at the old Squire, she is ready to go. There is no old mistress now to care for.

It is towards evening and dinner-time when the Squire comes. Serious but hale and well again, with a fine sea-colour in his cheeks, and his blue eyes

kind, clear and bright as ever. "Ay," says Joyce, "he has; he has gotten a new lease, and they'll make all up to him!"

As Katherine runs to kiss him with her joyful cry, he holds her off for a moment, and says: "Well, and how does the married woman? Blithe and bonny! And how are you, Rous? I saw your father in town this morning; and he will be with us tomorrow."

And that is the end of the story.

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